



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
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February 7, 2010

Theme: God Is Faithful in Trials

Text: Lamentations 3:1-26

This is the third in a series of messages about the faithfulness of God. Today we want to talk about God's faithfulness in trials. Last week I quoted Hebrews 13:5, which says, "We must be content with what we have, and be free from the love of money; for He has said, 'I will never leave you; I will never forsake you.'" We are going to look at God's faithfulness as we find it described in the short book of Lamentations. Most of us are probably not familiar with this book. It was written by the prophet Jeremiah just before, during, and after the destruction of Jerusalem in about 587 BC. It is not a happy book. Jeremiah mourns the destruction of his home city and the death of so many of his people. But in the midst of the mourning we find these words: "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." God has promised to be with us through all of our trials. We can count on Him to be faithful to that promise.

Because we have placed our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has promised to be our faithful friend. We can hardly imagine the physical suffering that Jesus experienced in His trial and death. But even more painful than His physical suffering was His spiritual suffering. In His humanity, Jesus experienced the complete absence of God. Near the end of His life as He hung on the cross, he cried out, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" Jesus, in his humanity, experienced total abandonment by God so that we would never have to experience it. As I have already said, the author of the book of Hebrews makes this promise, "...for he has said, 'never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'" This is a powerful promise. It is the promise of God's abiding presence. We may face trials in which it feels like God is far away—but He never is. It is in those times that we must actively place out trust in God. Jeremiah certainly knew what it was like to trust God in dark times.

James writes that we can expect to face many different kinds of trials. He invites us to consider this pure joy because God has a purpose in them. His purpose is to develop endurance in us. Endurance is the capacity to keep on going when the going gets tough. The trials that we can expect to face may take on many faces. They may come in the form of grief over the death of someone we love. They may come in the form of stress. We may be dealing with fear—fear of the future, for example. Trials may come in the form of natural disasters such as the earthquake that struck Haiti. Trials may come in the form of oppression, depression, or chronic illness. Through them all, God promises to be the faithful and powerful friend who will never leave our side. The main question in trials is this: Will we walk through the trials with God or without God? Will we rely on God's wisdom or upon our own wisdom?



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These are the questions that face us when we face trials of various kinds. In the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah pours out the pain of his heart and soul in what scholars call a "lament." But in the middle of his sorrow and mourning he speaks of God's compassion, which is new every morning. This declaration of God's goodness in the midst of a national disaster is like a flower that grows through the cracks in a concrete sidewalk. According to Jeremiah, each new day provides a fresh opportunity to experience the goodness of God. We have all experienced God's goodness in the past; but those experiences are in the past. They are memories to us now. The Bible has a theology of memories. God wants us to remember His goodness to us in the past so that those memories can become the foundation for a life of faith right now and on into the future. God's goodness to us in the past is not a one-time event. His past goodness is His promise that he will always reveal his goodness to us if we have the faith to receive it.

I want to conclude with a passage of Scripture that has to do with anxiety or worry. Peter writes, "Cast your anxiety upon him, for he cares for you." Peter does not mean that we should live in denial, refusing to face our problems and to deal with them. He calls us to let God carry our anxiety or worry or fear or depression. The word that is translated, "cares," is in what is called the present tense. The present tense expresses continual or habitual action. We could translate like this, "Cast your anxiety upon him, for he always cares for you." I want to leave you with a challenge this week: First, memorize this verse. It is found in 1 Peter 5:7. Second, act on this verse. When ever you find yourself being anxious or fearful or stressed, throw those things away into God's mighty hand. Let God carry them. Believe that God's goodness, mercy, and grace are new every morning. By faith, view each morning as a new opportunity to walk with God through whatever may come your way.