

PART 28 – HOW TO SEE YOUR PROBLEMS

We are still addressing the issue of perspective or how you see things that are taking place in your life. Perspective is everything in the Christian life simply because your perspective will make you or break you. For instance, your glass can be half full or half empty, and just that perspective alone can make a huge difference in your life - how you see people, how you make decisions, how you respond to difficult circumstances. So, I want you to see your problems in a certain way, in a biblical way – and trust me, but this really takes some degree of spiritual and mental effort on your part. Just having the world, the flesh, and the devil to contend with seems to make seeing life from God’s perspective a spiritual and mental battlefield for so many – and I am sure that it is at times.

❖ ARE YOU COMPLETELY CRAZY?

Have you ever had someone ask you to do something that you thought was totally crazy? I will never forget when someone told me that if I would give them \$50,000 that they would let me be on their board. Honestly, I thought they were on drugs. If you asked me to go skydiving, bungee jumping, or cliff diving, I would think that you were crazy – so there is no need for you to even ask me. My final answer will always be the same – “No”.

Now, I know you may think this is somewhat crazy, but I want you to see your problems, difficulties, and struggles in a different way than you probably do. I want you to see them as a “*gift from God*”. Now, I know that you are thinking to yourself “*Are you kidding me – see my problems as a gift? That does not even make sense. You must be crazy!*” Well, actually, I am not crazy. However, when you come to the Scriptures, you have to appreciate that God seems to always have a different perspective than we do. For instance, [James 1:2-4](#) says,

Jas 1:2 (NKJV) My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Now, there is one thing that really stands out in these three verses and it has to do with “**joy**”. So, the first thing that you have to do is to define the difference between joy and happiness. Trust me, but they are not the same. Many people will say something like “*I’m just not happy*”, but unfortunately they would equate that as not having any joy. I.e., they see joy and happiness as equal, but they are not equal. **Happiness is a direct by-product of your circumstances**, so if your circumstances are going like you want them to go, then you are happy. However, if your circumstances turn in the opposite direction, then you become unhappy. At that point you are simply on an emotional roller coaster ride. Why is that? Well, it is because your circumstances will always be changing. For instance,

1. One term the Republicans win and you are happy and the next term the Democrats win and you are unhappy
2. One day your boss is really pleasant and you are happy, and the next day he is very unpleasant and you are unhappy.
3. One day you think you are going to get a significant raise and you are happy, but the next day your raise was only half of what you thought it might be and you are unhappy.

4. One day you are driving in your car and all is well and you are happy, but the next day you break down on the side of the road and you are unhappy.

So, happiness is most always a by-product of your ever fluctuating circumstances.

On the other hand, though, God gives you His “joy”. Joy is much different from happiness because **joy is not dependent on your circumstances**. With joy it does not matter if your circumstances are good or bad because in Christ you know that the sovereign God that you love and serve is in complete control of your life. The word “happy” is only used twice in the New Testament, but the word “joy” is used 61 times. Speaking of the joy that Christ had, [Hebrews 12:2](#) says,

Heb 12:2 (NKJV) **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

[2 Corinthians 8:2](#) speaking of what the Corinthians did in their affliction, says,

2Co 8:2 (NKJV) **that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.**

[Galatians 5:22](#) says,

Gal 5:22 (NKJV) **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**

It does not say that the fruit of the Spirit is happiness. It says that it is joy. So here in [James 1:2](#), James gives what seems like an oxymoron, but it is not.

Jas 1:2 (NKJV) **My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,**

Stated in a different way, this is very much a part of the Christian life – **intentionally choosing joy over happiness**. Now, listen very carefully. This is very important.

KEY PRINCIPLE 87: IF HAPPINESS IS WHAT YOU MUST HAVE, THEN YOU WILL RARELY, IF EVER, BE TRULY HAPPY.

Why is that? It is because:

1. Life will always find a way to disappoint you. The world is not for you and not on your side, and it does not play by your rules.
2. People will always find a way to disappoint you. People will use you, hurt you, and leave you both frustrated and irritated.
3. Your circumstances will always find a way to disappoint you. The devil is doing everything that he can to make your life as difficult and unfulfilling as possible.

The result is that you will always be going from being happy to being unhappy. One day will be really good and the next day will be really bad. One moment you will be happy, and the next moment you will be unhappy. In that “**state of mind**”, you are always one phone call away or one text message away or one irritable person away or one difficult circumstance away from being unhappy. It is a vicious cycle.

Joy, on the other hand, is simply not based on your circumstances. You can actually have joy in the very worst of circumstances. [Hebrews 12:2](#) says that Jesus did. Joy is based on knowing God in a deep and intimate way, and the more that you get to know Him, the greater joy you will have in your life. Even when you get bad news, or even when your circumstances turn sour, you will still have joy knowing that God is in complete control of every circumstance of your life and that He will never leave you or forsake you.

KEY PRINCIPLE 88: PEOPLE WHO ARE ALWAYS SEEKING HAPPINESS ARE RARELY SEEKING GOD.

Seeking happiness is their Achilles hill and their spiritual undoing. So, if you do not understand the difference between happiness and joy, invariably two things will begin to happen:

1. You will slowly turn away from God because your happiness, which is anchored to your circumstances, is a greater issue to you than your joy which is anchored to your relationship with God.
2. You will always be expressing some level of disappointment in why things in your life are not turning out like you had anticipated they would. You can always spot unhappy people because they are very often complaining people. They are never satisfied with what God may be doing in their life.

Trust me, but what you want is joy, not happiness. **Joy is secure, but happiness is always fleeting.** What you want is for your life to be anchored in God and not in your always changing circumstances - many of which you simply cannot control. So, if you are willing to trust God when you “**fall into various trials**” as [James 1:2](#) says, then you can know with assurance that during any particular trial that God is “**refining**” your faith to help develop patience, endurance, and perseverance in your life. I know that someone is going to think to themselves, “*Well, I would rather be happy than have to learn how to persevere or be patient. In fact, I believe that I can be more patient when I am happy.*” If you are someone who thinks like that, then you simply do not think like God thinks.

I want you to think of our adage that we want to “think like God thinks” as simply another way of saying that you are willing to trust God with your life. If God says that there is a certain way that you are to think and you actually begin to think that way, then in essence you are placing your faith and your trust in Him and in His Word. You have made a willful choice that you will allow your life to be governed by God’s Word and not your personal preferences. On the other hand, if you consistently choose to think however you please, then in essence you will have no faith in God. You are actually placing your thoughts above His thoughts. It is like you are saying that you are smarter and wiser than God and do not need His wisdom. Good luck with that. Listen to [Hebrews 11:6](#),

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) 6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Let me paraphrase this verse for you. It will sound a little different, but I think it will make the point of what I am trying to say.

If I am not willing to believe God’s Word, then it will be impossible to please Him, for when I come to God I must believe that what He says is true, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently give themselves to believing His Word so that they can think like He does.

So, why can you be joyful when you “**fall into various trials**”? Well, it is simply because you know that the trial is what God is using to change you to be more like Him. Now, you may not want that. You may deeply prefer happiness over trials and for everything to work out exactly like you want, but that is not how the Christian life works. Maybe I should say that you greatly prefer your personal happiness over God’s divine work in your life. If happiness was the end goal, then I think that God would have written much more about it in His Word, but He did not. So, if happiness and freedom from difficult circumstances is what you want more than God working in your life, then I doubt that you will rarely, if ever, experience God’s amazing joy. Here is what you will find to be true for your life.

KEY PRINCIPLE 89: THE MORE OF GOD’S ABIDING JOY THAT YOU HAVE, THE LESS OF THE WORLD’S FLEETING HAPPINESS YOU WILL NEED.

[1 Thessalonians 5:18](#) says,

1Th 5:18 (NKJV) in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Christians who cannot find God’s joy in their difficult circumstances will never be inclined to give thanks in everything. This is the litmus test. This is how you measure where you truly are in your Christian life – **how much do I complain**? Your willingness to give God thanks in your difficult circumstances is probably the greatest evidence that you are truly trusting God when things are not going as you want them to go. Here is what you will find. The more that you complain, the less joy you will have.

I hope you understand that what we are addressing here is a mindset, a neural pathway, a way of thinking that controls your life. It is God’s truth that you have become convinced of and to which you are willing to submit your life – no matter how it impacts your life. Jesus said the following in [John 16:33](#) about what to expect in the Christian life,

John 16:33 (NKJV) 33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

[James 1:4](#) says that your “**trials**” will make you “**perfect and complete**” so that your Christian life is not lacking anything. The word “**perfect**” means to be mature. It means that you are growing spiritually, mentally, and morally.¹ So, it is critical to understand that trials are how you grow as a Christian.

Trials are one of the chief tools that God uses to conform you to the image of Christ, so if you resent your trials, it may be because you are subtly resentful of God’s spiritual work in your life.

You may not like me saying it this way, but it is like you are telling God that He does not know what He is doing. You must have a paradigm shift where you see your trials in a good way. You have to develop a spiritual perspective, a biblical mindset, a neural pathway that sees everything that God is doing in

¹ Strong, *teleois*, #5046, ep.

your life as very, very good. God is never making a mistake in how He works in your life. In essence, you can never grow spiritually apart from trials.

KEY PRINCIPLE 90: TRIALS TEST YOUR FAITH IN ORDER TO PROVE YOUR FAITH.

No trials, no faith. No trials, no growth. No trials, no endurance. Trials are simply a very normal part of the Christian life. This has to be the mindset that you develop – **trials are very good for my life**. Constantly remind yourself of that reality so that you develop the proper neural pathway in your brain.

No wonder so many Christians are defeated by every little trial that comes their way. It is like when a trial happens that they resent it interfering in their life. They think to themselves “*I don't need this. I have other things to concentrate on rather than dealing with this unpleasant person or this very difficult circumstance.*” It could be that you are suffering in your life because of something that someone else did to you, and you have become bitter and angry towards that person. This happens all of the time. In the trial that you are engaged in, you simply do not feel like your pain is justified. You think to yourself that you are a good Christian and that you never did anything to deserve what is going on in your life.

Now, there is a very important principle that every committed follower of Christ must learn. This will greatly help you when you find yourself going through a difficult trial in your life.

KEY PRINCIPLE 91: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING ABOUT HOW GOD WORKS TO TRUST HIM.

Knowing everything about God is an impossibility, but learning to trust God is very possible.

You have to look through your problems so that you can see God's hand in them, and when you do, you will always find God on the other side. I have no idea why I got cancer when I was 61. To someone getting cancer at a fairly early age, it may seem unfair, but it has not impacted me that way. God has used everything that has happened to me with my cancer to simply draw me and my wife closer to Him. My life is in his hands. That is my neural pathway, and that is how I see my life. That is my mindset and my spiritual perspective. I have found the goodness of God in my prolonged battle with cancer.

People walk down the aisles of churches all the time and in essence they are trying to say that they are surrendering their life to Christ. However, as they progress in their Christian life, it seems that rather than yielding themselves to the power of God that is able to work mightily in their life that they resist surrendering to God's power and God's work in them. They have their own ideas and simply cannot accept what and how God desires to do in them through their trials.

God wants to work mightily on your behalf, but if you are always resisting what he wants you to do, then the power of God will not be released in your life. You **MUST LEARN** to trust God. This must become how you think and how you see life. You have to know and believe that He is **ALWAYS** working on your behalf. The first step for you as a believer is that you have **to admit that this is actually a problem for you** – this idea of actually trusting God and yielding to Him in the midst of your trial.

1. I wonder how often you are willing to admit that you really do have a problem trusting God in your difficult circumstances.

2. I wonder if you are willing to even accept what God may be doing in your life because of the mental and emotional discomfort that you believe that it causes in your life.

Once again, you have to look **through** your problems if you are ever going to see God in them. God allows and sovereignly orchestrates many of the trials in your life as one of the means of driving you to Him, and especially when you are not taking His Word seriously. He does not necessarily cause every problem you face, but He may certainly allow it to impact your life – and to you that may seem unfair. Here is what you must see when a trial disrupts your life.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 92: YOU MUST LEARN TO BE CONTENT WITH WHATEVER GOD
ALLOWS IN YOUR LIFE.**

Once again, this is a way of thinking, a neural pathway that you have to develop in your life. It is like you already have a mindset before anything actually happens where you are able to genuinely and sincerely say *“Lord, whatever you allow in my life, I am willing to trust you completely that you know what is best for me. I will not complain, but will give you thanks in everything. I trust you completely with my life and with my circumstances – good or bad.”*

The way that you can know whether or not you have reached this place is **whether or not you can give God thanks** for the unpleasant struggles and circumstances that are actually taking place in your life. If you cannot, then you have not reached this point in your life. Think of it this way. You do not yet have this neural pathway. Your circumstances may be unpleasant and certainly not what you wanted, but you must learn to be content with them and give God thanks for them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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