

506 Does Jesus Care?

Life can get difficult and hard to bear, sometimes very quickly. Does Jesus care about my health, my heart-break, my finances, my family, or my life? The sons of Korah in Psalm 42 describe the heartache of longing for God..

As the deer pants for the water brooks,

So my soul pants for You, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;

When shall I come and appear before God?

3 My tears have been my food day and night,

While *they* say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”

Does Jesus Care?

Mark 4:35 On that day, when evening came, He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, “Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?” They became very much afraid and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

Being out on a lake when the wind gets contrary can be a very frightening experience. I can only imagine what it must have been like to have your boat filling up with water! Storms came up suddenly on the sea of Galilee. In the middle of the storm, Jesus is asleep, with “his head on a cushion.” The disciples cry out “Master, don’t you care that we are perishing?” This is the question we must each answer. We look at our world and its problems, and we wonder if God is paying attention. We need help with problems that are bigger than we are and need his help now. Jesus doesn’t answer the question. He rebukes the storm and wonders why the disciples are afraid. “How is it that you have no faith?”

Of course Jesus cares. As one reads the book of Mark, he sees this:

●delivers Legion, the man with a multitude of demons who lived like a beast (5:1–20),

●Heals a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years (5:25–34),

●raises the daughter of Jairus (5:21–24, 35–43)

Someone objects, “But why does God not stop every problem. Why is it sometimes He seems asleep and uncaring?”

Here is the assumption, that if God doesn’t stop problems, He doesn’t care. The idea is that we should live in a world free from any challenges or difficulties. God who loves us should protect us from any problem whatsoever. But is a painless world, free from any problem at all, really the best for us. It may be convenient and comfortable, but is it best for our character, for our maturity, for our growth as individuals.

Isn’t it challenge that shapes us into people of character? James said, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4). James 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

What Jesus does do to show He cares:

He understands suffering in that He himself suffered for our sins. He took upon Himself the penalty that was rightfully our own. 1 Pet. 2:24 He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. God did not stop the cross. When Jesus prayed with tears to let this cup pass, God did not relent. He gave His Son because He loved you, even as He loved His Son.

No one has suffered more than our Father in heaven. No one has paid more dearly for the allowance of sin into the world. No one has so continuously grieved over the pain of a race gone bad. No one has suffered like the One who paid for our sin in the crucified body of His own Son.

No one has suffered more than the One who, when He stretched out His arms and died, showed us how much He loved us. It is this God who, in drawing us to Himself, asks us to trust Him when we are suffering and when our own loved ones cry out in our presence.

1 Pet. 2:21-23 “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously.” *This is what the disciples in the boat needed to do—entrust their souls to God!*

1 Pet. 5:6-11 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you. To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen.

He didn’t stop you from sinning; He gave you free will and permitted you to sin. We want God to stop every bad thing in our lives, but we don’t always remember that we are often the source of our own pain and trouble. Sin hurts; it hurts God; it hurts you and everyone around you. He loves you enough to tell you the truth and expect you to make changes in your life. He loved you enough, however, to pay the penalty for your sin and rescue you.

He loves you enough to ask you to change, to repent. He knows that there is a better person inside you, wanting to come out. He knows that your repentance will not only bless your life but bless all the people around that a life of sin may hurt. He graciously gives us time to repent. 2 Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Jesus loved you enough to set an example of how to live and love. He showed us how to forgive and how to be forgiven. He gave us his Word to guide our lives. He could say: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30)

Instead of blaming God for pain, we should be looking to Him for strength, and let tragedies remind us that this world never was intended to be our final home. James 4:14 instructs us regarding the fact that our time on this Earth is extremely brief. The fact that even the Son of God was subjected to incredible evil, pain, and suffering (Hebrews 5:8; 1 Peter 2:21ff.), proves that God does love and care for His creation. He could have abandoned us to our own sinful devices, but instead, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

This life is not all there is. Paul, who suffered for his faith as much as anyone, said, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18). We must learn to see with the eye of faith and trust. The last chapter has not yet been written. When Jesus comes again, He will punish the evildoers who have caused so much pain. When He comes, He will bless the righteous and comfort them.

Suffering can actually be **beneficial**. Think of the man whose chest begins to throb as he enters the beginning of a heart attack. Think of the woman whose side begins to ache at the onset of acute appendicitis. Is it not true that pain often sends us to the doctor for prevention or cure? Suffering helps people develop the traits that people treasure the most. Bravery, heroism, altruistic love, self-sacrifice—all flourish in less-than-perfect environments, do they not? Yet people who exhibit such traits are cherished and honored as having gone “above and beyond the call of duty.” Was this not the very point Christ was making when He said: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13)?

The most important question is not “why did this happen to me?” A better question to ask is “what shall I do now?” Some reject God and abandon Him when sorrow comes their way. Usually such people turn inward, totally selfish. Others embrace God to find that God has not forgotten them. They entrust their souls to Him and find that His promise is true: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.” (Rom. 8:28)

Not everything that happens to us is good; but we must not assume that the only way God can care for us is to prevent troubles.

God shows His care by taking the hardest things in our lives and turning them for good, to bless us and to bless others.

God has power to prevent, yes; and we have no idea all the harm from which He has protected us. But God also has power to take things at their worst and make good out of them. He can do that for you.

Paul once prayed three times for the Lord to take away his “thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan” sent to torment him (2 Cor. 12:7). God did not grant Paul’s request but said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”

Paul had to face the fact that this thorn was not going away. Was he bitter? No. God’s power is perfected in weakness. “Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.” (12:9-10)

God’s grace is indeed sufficient, when you think of all that God has done and is doing for us. God does indeed care. Just as Jesus wept with Mary and Martha, He weeps with us when we hurt and provides comfort.

Paul said, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.” (2 Cor. 1:3-5)

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