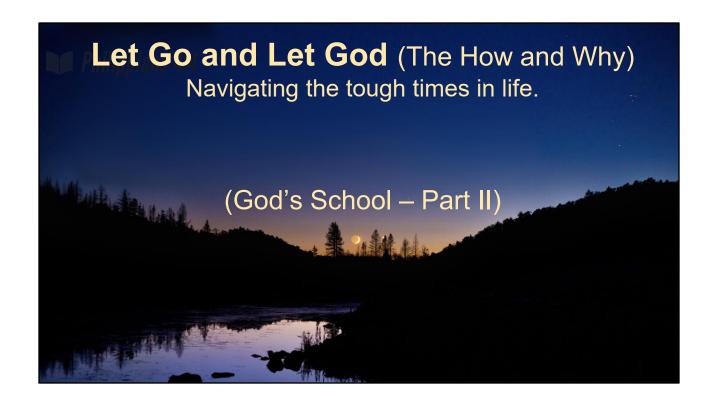
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Presentation Statistics:	
Visible Slides (A): 63	
Hidden Slides (B): 28	
Total Slides (A + B): 91	Get Stats
Total animation clicks from all slides (C): 69	
Total clicks to show all content (A + C): 132	





#### **Reading Assignment:**

- 1 Samuel 18 31, especially, 1 Samuel 23:14-29 and 1 Samuel 24
- David a Fugitive, <u>Patriarch and Prophets</u> chapter 64.
- Hebrews 12:3-17, James 1:2-8

### Let Go and Let God

### Let Go of what?

- Striving in our own strength
- Trying to figure it all out
- Anger, depression, frustration...

### Let God what?

- Lead in all things
- Have total control
- Mold you into the image of Christ
- Let's put some meat on our catchy title phrase
- Bottom line, we will see how trusting in God can give us peace, joy, and wisdom during our struggles and that we will be the better for our struggles when we give God control. "13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure." Philippians 2:13.



#### DISCLAIMER

- No claim to have suffered a lot; many here in church today have had much worse struggles than I have.
- Up until recently, my life has been easy. So, when my tough times came, I really struggled.
- God has been using these trials to teach and sanctify me.
- Most of my current trials are related to my dear wife Gloria's battle
  with dementia which include two falls with hospitalization, 24x7
  nursing homes, and significant memory declines after the falls.



#### DISCLAIMER

#### Some of my specific struggles:

- Watching the love of my life fade into oblivion. Some of you have experienced this or are experiencing it now.
- Losing my wife's companionship. We can no longer share new experiences or reminisce about the old ones.
- No more long walks in the park; no world travel...
- Dealing with hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted living.
- Managing her insanely expensive care costs.
- Loneliness
- Etc.



#### **OBJECTIVES FOR TODAY:**

- Look at life and its frequent or constant struggles from a Biblical world view; that is, from God's standpoint.
- Look at the various reasons for our struggles and how God will, if we allow, use them for our blessing.
- There is lots of material so hold on to your hats, I'm going to zoom through some of the better-known content.
- At the end, there will be a QR Code where you can download all this
  material including extra slides and notes. (AV: Please leave the code
  up at the end of the message).





### Satan's I Problem

"12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

# Revelation 12:7-9, 12

## War in Heaven

"7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, <sup>8</sup> but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. <sup>9</sup> So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him... <sup>12</sup>... Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time.

- Note Revelation 12:4:
  - And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth...
  - The deceived angels became the demons that are in league with Satan to torment us.
- Thus, Satan's desire is to destroy or create the maximum amount of pain for all of God's creation but particularly mankind.



#### Setting the stage

- There are two major combatants in the cosmic conflict: God and Satan.
- We are the trophies of this cosmic conflict. That is, the battle is for the hearts and minds of mankind.
- The adversary, Satan, uses lies and any other hateful and violent tactics that will work. For Satan, the end justifies the means. For example, consider the life of Job.
- God's objective is to raise up children in the image of Christ that are qualified work in his vineyard and to enter His heaven.
- · God can only use truth and love to woo us with the Holy Spirit.



#### **Reviewing the Great Controversy**

- 1. This is the war between Christ and Satan where we are the prize.
- 2. We need to consider this conflict from God's perspective.
- 3. Then we will outline the various reasons for our struggle and examine strategies for coping with them.



#### Setting the stage

- As exposed in the first two chapters of the book of Job, there are rules of engagement in the spiritual realm.
- Although God kept a hedge about Job, God allowed (for His purpose) Satan to create the worst possible struggles for Job.
- God allowed Job's struggles to be a showcase to the loyal angels, the unfallen worlds, and to you and me. Through Job's story, we have clear introduction to the Great Controversy.
- Job's story exposes the character of both God and Satan's.



#### **Setting the stage**

- When Satan was defeated at the cross, his true nature was fully exposed to the universe.
- Although Satan was defeated, this battle continues to rage until Christ's second return.
- Therefore, we can expect that our many struggles in this life now to only increase as we become bearers of the last day message.



Here is what I hope that you can take away from today:

- **1. God has a plan** for each event and moment of our lives, a plan to bless us and "give us a future and a hope."
- 2. God is in in full control and hand picks both our trials and our blessings!
- **3. Understanding** struggles from God's perspective allows us to choose the proper attitude which can **eliminate worry** and stress.



#### Let's use an analogy to help us understand lives struggles

- How many have raised children?
- And which of you found it quite a challenge to overcome the worldly values your kid learned or is learning from their school or peers?
- Are not some children a much greater challenge to raise than others? While some are born pliant, others seem to have been born rebellious (that's me)!



#### The human parent:

- It's tough to be a good parent because by the time you kids are about 6 to 8 years, most of us became a minority influence in our kids lives. Quality time with them diminishes rapidly when they start to school, particularly public school.
- Even after school, there's all the extracurricular activities, chores, homework, television, and on and on (think mom's taxi service).
- Properly navigating tough times is necessary to be able to "train up a child in the way he should go".



- Here's a question:
  - If God had more influence in your life, would you not be better equipped to handle the tough times which He has chosen to allow? What do you think?

### Does this reveal a needed change in our lives?

- · Switching gears a little.
- Before analyzing our trials, we need to briefly outline the "Great Controversy".
- That is, we must understand the why of human suffering.

Q1: If God is love, why is there suffering and pain?
A1: Because Satan is now the ruler of this world.

 Ever had a skeptic with whom you are sharing the gospel throw this question at you?

This simple and highly deficient answer only begs another question.

Q1: If God is love, why suffering and pain?

A1: Because Satan is now the ruler of this world.

Q2: Couldn't God just zap the rebels immediately?

#### Background: Satan told great lies about God's character:

- God is arbitrary as are His laws. Nobody can keep God's law.
- God wants to control you, to keep you from being all you could otherwise be.
- My way is better. Follow me and you can experience life to the fullest and be gods!
- I deserve your worship.
- The real question is why did God allow Satan to become the ruler of this world.
- This is a very complex question, and the answer requires we look briefly at the lies Satan spread about God as he was fomenting his revolution.
- To be worshiped more than Christ became Satan's desire as pride rose in his heart.
- Note, these are the same lies Satan and his demons tell us today, particularly the lie that we can be or are gods!!!

Q1: If God is love, why suffering and pain?

A1: Because Satan is now the ruler of this world.

Q2: Couldn't God just zap the rebels immediately?

A2A: If Satan and his angels go poof, what would you think?

- Was what Satan said true? God's action does seem rather arbitrary and sudden!
- If I don't toe the line, am I next?
- I fear I'll go poof like my friends!!!←

Still looking at the Zap Q: Assume you are among of the **loyal** angels.

- Some (or perhaps many) of the rebelling angels are your friends.
- Satan's great intelligence, beauty and exalted position would have given him tremendous credibility and powers of persuasion!
- For those that angels chose to stay with God, it had to be a tough decision, and they probably still have had lingering questions. **Think about this...**
- · Satan and some of your friends that had joined him just disappear.
- Would you question God? How would you feel?
- · Would you no longer serve God out of love but out of fear?
- Bottom line: God could not just remove Satan and His angels.

Q1: If God is love, why suffering and pain?

A1: Because Satan is now the ruler of this world.

Q2: Why not zap Satan immediately in heaven?

A2A: What If Satan and his angels go poof?

A2B: No zapping since Satan had lied about God

For truth to be revealed it was necessary for God to allow

Satan to implement his form of government.

A2C: God is vindicated by the cross.

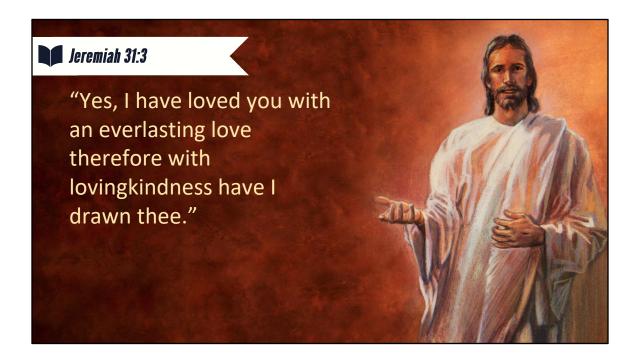
God's true character and infinite love were revealed as was Satan's totally evil nature.

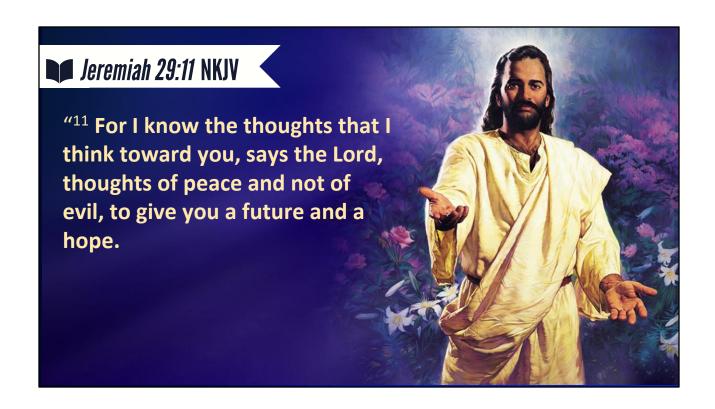
- This answer is an offshoot of answer A2A. That is, since God cannot just eliminate the rebels, his only choice is to allow all the universe to see the disastrous effects in Satan's way.
- · But there is good news:

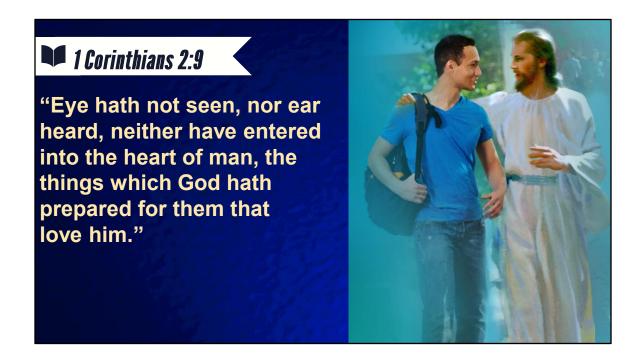
Before we dive into struggles, let's quickly review a little of God's nature.

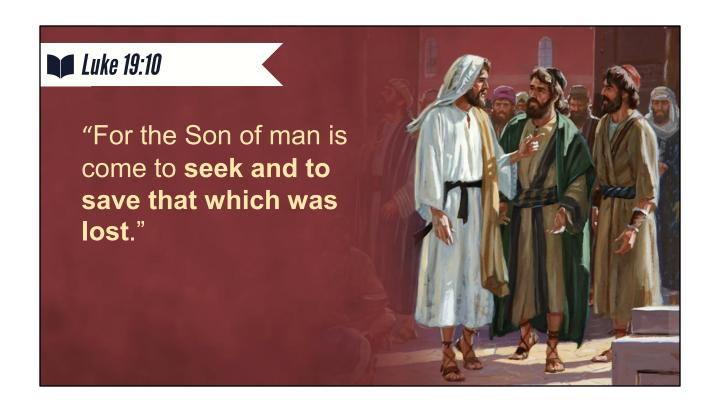


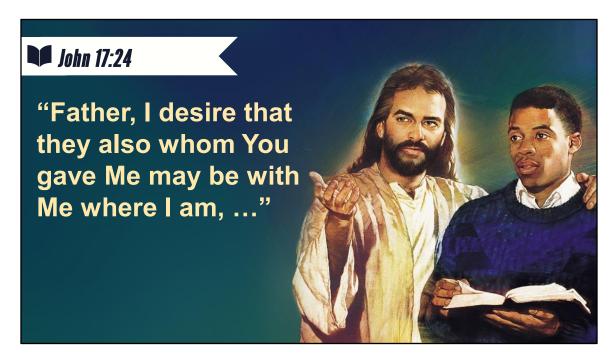
- A retiring Dallas Theological Seminary professor was asked what the greatest truth that he had learned during his 50 years at the seminary. His response was:
  - "Jesus loves me, this I know. Because the Bible tells me so."
- So, how much does Jesus love us?



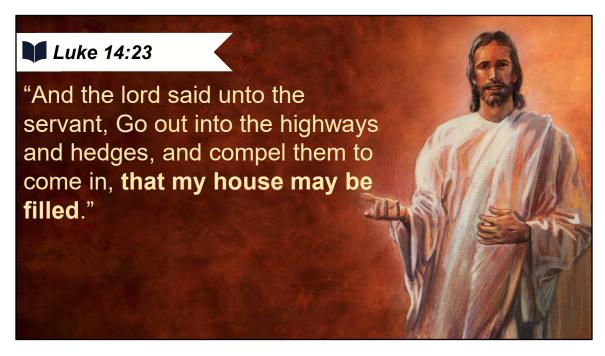




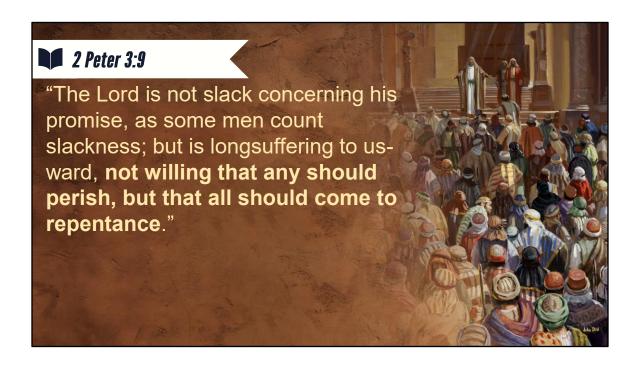




Christ wants us to be in heaven with him.

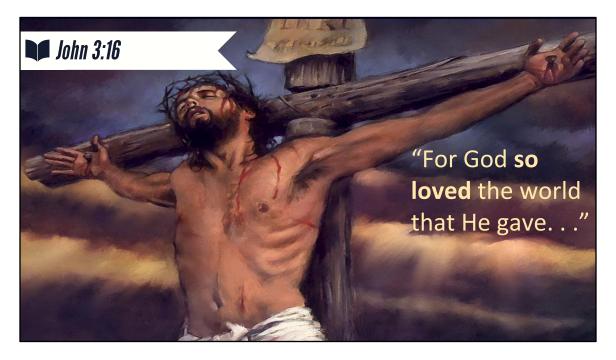


• This explains one reason why Christ tarries.

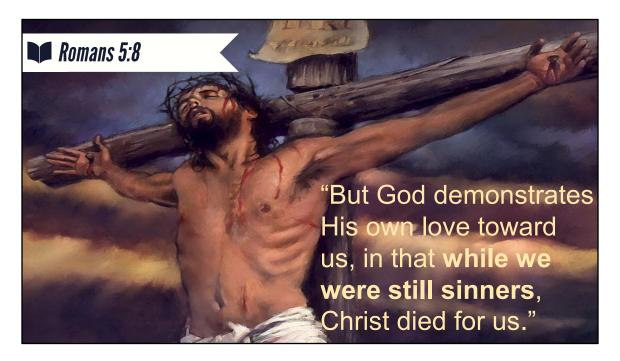


### The Sin Problem

- God created us to lavish His perfect love on us.
- God is perfectly righteous and holy.
- Thus, sin cannot exist in the presence of God.
- God is also just and His penalty for sin is death.
- God still loves us and still wants us in heaven.
- What to do: love and justice seem to conflict for the death penalty is required.
- Solution: Father and Son covenant that the Son will be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. ←
- Perfect Sacrifice: Father and Son understood the need for Christ's sacrifice before the world was created: before time.



God's great love



God's great love

# Christ's Suffering Foretold

"4 Surely, he hath **borne our griefs and carried our sorrows**: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was wounded for our sins, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath **laid on him the iniquity of us all**. (Isaiah 53:4-6)

- Remember these phrases:
  - · "...borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."
  - "...laid upon him the iniquity of us all."

### Gethsemane

### **Drops of Blood**

<sup>43</sup> And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.

<sup>44</sup> And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Luke 22: 43-44)

- Condition is called Hematohidrosis is a condition in which capillary blood vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture, causing them to exude blood; it occurs under conditions of extreme physical or emotional stress and is usually fatal.
- Christ was feeling all the pain...in all the days...of all people...in all times...and at the same time as He struggled in the garden.
- Fatal! No wonder an angel had to strengthen Christ (so He could be our perfect sacrifice at precisely the time of the evening sacrifice).
- What incredible love.

# Gethsemane

"And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be sorrowful and very heavy." (Matthew 26:37)

- Christ was the sinless son of God:
  - He hated sin; He could not look upon sin.
  - Sin was totally contrary to his nature.
- But as our sin bearer, all the filth...of all the sins...of all humanity...in all ages was placed upon Him.
- Christ feared that that load of sin would be so abhorrent to the Father that He, Christ, might be eternally separated from the Father.
- No wonder He prayed three times for the cup to pass from Him "if it were possible".
- But it was not possible, so, He yielded His will to the Father and said, "Thy will be done."

# Gethsemane

The anguish of Christ's tears at Gethsemane covered the depth of the collective tears of all humanity of all ages. They cannot be comprehended by finite minds; they were not only tears of compassion or even empathy since He not only suffered with you but also as you as He paid the death penalty for your sin.

 I don't have the source of this quote, but it accurately describes Christ's suffering in the Garden

# Gethsemane "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

- · But Christ also suffered as you.
- When Jesus Christ suffered for us with tears and crying the whole humanity was in him and the whole humanity was taken to the cross and died for and in him.
- This is an amazing thought. This is corporate suffering for the whole human race.

# Restoration (Righteousness by Faith)

God responds (like the father of the prodigal son):

- He runs to us as soon as we take a step towards Him.
- He forgives our sins and buries them in the sea.
- We are given Christ's righteousness.
- We are given the faith of Christ!
- He pats us on the back and says, "Now, go and sin no more!"
- He gives us wisdom to cease from sin;
   but we must constantly choose to accept
   that wisdom.
- God's plan to restore out relationship, salvation if you will, is Righteousness by Faith.
- · Here is a brief summary:

H

# Plan of Salvation

(Christ our Righteousness)

## Additional Reading:

- Christ our Righteousness by A. G. Daniels: PDF Download
  - PowerPoint presentation on Ch. 1 by S. K. Culp. PDF Download
- Why Jesus Waits by Herbert E. Douglas: An analysis of the heavenly sanctuary process as related to salvation. <u>PDF Download</u>
- The Great Controversy by E. G. White: A historical view of the Christian Church explaining many biblical topics: <u>PDF Download</u>
- Steps to Christ by E. G. White: a biblical study of how to build and enjoy a great relationship with Jesus Christ. <u>PDF Download</u>
- Peace in This Life a PowerPoint by S. K. Culp. PDF Download

"Christ our righteousness is the one sublime message set forth in the Sacred Scriptures. However varied the forms and phrases in which this message may be unfolded and presented, yet always, from every point of the circle, the central commanding theme is, Christ our righteousness." A. G. Daniels in forward to Christ our Righteousness)



- A proper understanding God's love and desire to save us is absolutely essential for handling tough times.
- This is why we need to dwell on Christ's gift at the cross.
- Moving on...



Social it closely related to love but think about this:

- Why did God create mankind? Answer: Because He needed a people upon whom He could lavish His infinite love.
  - If God had human limitations and emotions, we could say that God was lonely.
  - True love must be expressed and demonstrated to a being <u>that</u> can return that love.
  - · Bottom line, God wants to bless us abundantly.
  - Now that sin has entered the world, He stands ready forgive all our confessed sins and again to bless us in this life and will take us first to heaven and then the new earth.

# Characteristics/traits of God Omnipresent

- When we say that God is "Omnipresent", it is the same as saying that God is simultaneously everywhere in both space and time.
- Let's flesh this out a bit.

# **Psalm 139:1-5**

# God is Everywhere

"O Lord, You have searched me and known *me.* <sup>2</sup> You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. <sup>3</sup> You comprehend my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. <sup>4</sup> For there is not a word on my tongue, *But* behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. <sup>5</sup> You have hedged me behind and before and laid Your hand upon me."

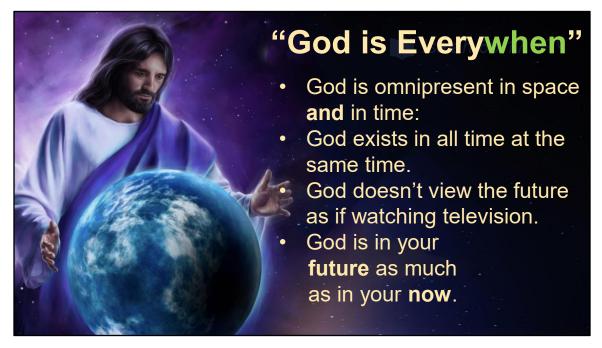
# **Psalm 139:6-10**

# God is Everywhere

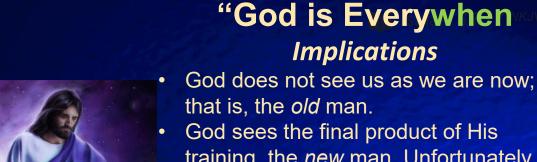
"6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it. 7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?

8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.

"In other words, He is Everywhere"]



- However, God is also Everywhen
- · Is this Clear?
- Isn't it not logical to say that He knows our future struggles as well as all current struggles?
- Interestingly, His being everywhen affects how he sees us.



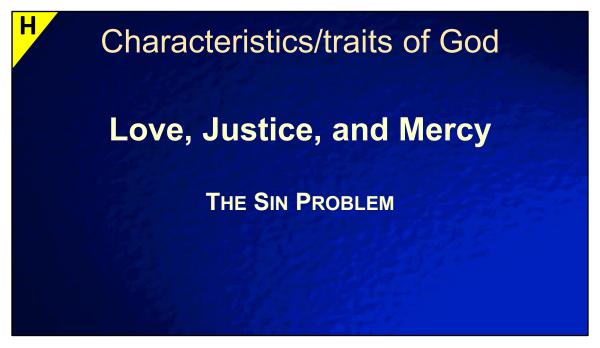
- God sees the final product of His training, the *new* man. Unfortunately, that final product, depends upon how much we allow God to do in our lives.  $\leftarrow$
- God existing in all times of our lives has some important implications related to our discussion:
- Repeating: the final product where God is transforming us into the image of Christ depends upon how much we allow the master potter to do in our lives. That is, how we respond to and learn from life's struggles.



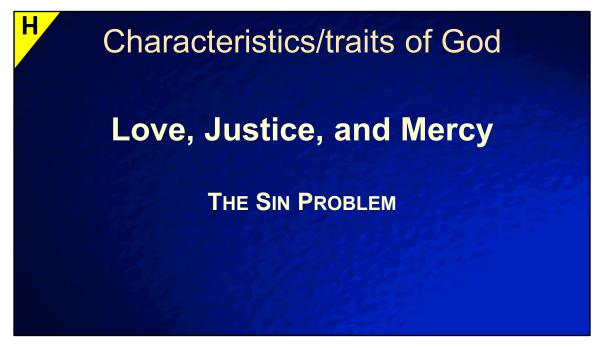
- Using a college example, before you take calculus, you need to have learned algebra! In other words, God will ensure that we *learn* the prerequisites before the time when they will be needed. ☺
- Are you willing in prayer to tell God that you want Him to discipline and teach you as He sees best? Regardless of the difficulties that may bring into your life???



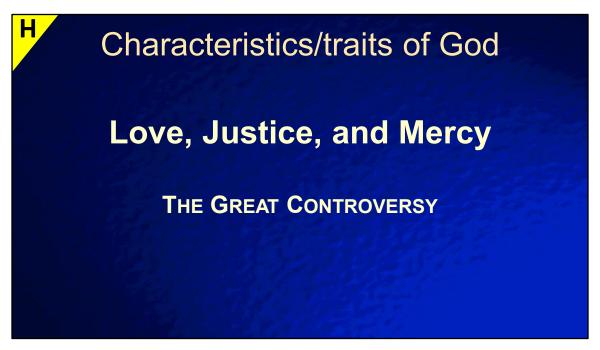
 Since God is present everywhere and "everywhen" at the same time, is it not clear that He is also omniscient?



- God in His love created us to live forever with Him, return His love, and enjoy His blessings.
- But sin entered the universe in Eden.
- Sin is a violation of God's law, a violation that has a penalty of death.
- God's justice demands that the penalty must be paid even though God's mercy wants to just forgive us.
- The solution is for God's only son, Christ, took on Himself the responsibility of our sin and paid our penalty at the cross.

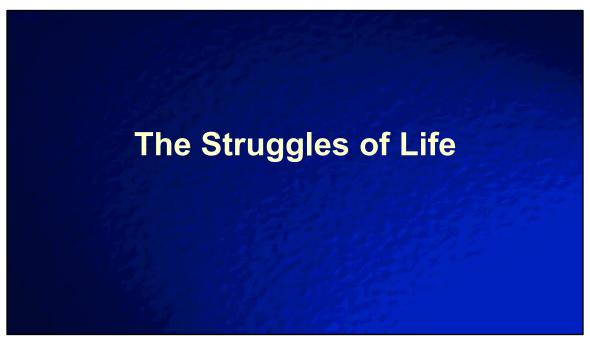


- God's justice is satisfied, and God's love is rewarded with the redemption of all that accept Christ's great sacrifice. The redeemed souls will enjoy eternal life experiencing all the blessings that the father is to bestow on us.
- Q: Since Christ paid the penalty for all sins for all time, does that imply all would be saved?
  - A: By allowing Christ to be Lord of our lives, our sins are removed as we receive Christ' righteousness. This allows us to stand in the presence of a holy God.
  - A: If those that refuse Christ entered heaven, their sins and they themselves would be burned up in God's presence because their righteousness is as filthy rags.



• Love, Justice, and Mercy have all been illustrated by the material above on the Great Controversy.



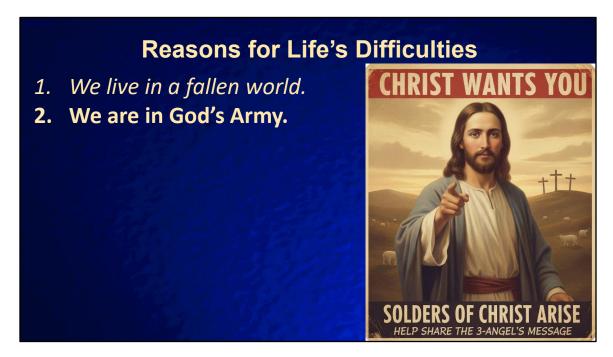


• Switching gears now, let's look at the various reasons for the tough times in our lives.

- 1. We live in a fallen world and have an enemy.
  - Bad things happen to good people and sometimes the result is significant trauma leaving emotional scars for years.
  - This topic is beyond our scope today.
  - For additional information, watch this video series by K'dee Crews PhD given at the Marquette SDA church.



1. We live in a fallen world



### 2. God's Army:

- In view of the nearness of Christ's return, it is safe to say that we all will need to be prepared for the battles to come?
- In other words, those that are ready to meet their Lord at his return are now in God's bootcamp to strengthen and polish them?
- · Elaborating...

- We live in a fallen world.
- 2. We are in God's Army.
  - Consider the very tough training in a military bootcamp:
    - Mental and physical training, strategy, tactics, weapons, the enemy, history of previous battles, etc.
    - Emotional training to teach perseverance and assurance of victory in the face to difficult situations.
  - We now face the last great battle between Christ and Satan. As God's foot soldiers bringing God's final message of warning, we can expect to be greatly opposed by the enemy.

### God's Army:

- In your thinking, compare military bootcamp as God's preparing Christians for the be his messengers and foot soldiers in the final conflict...
  - So, as you look around, can you see how God is beginning to prepare us for the end?
  - Should we not expect to <u>need</u> intense training if we are to be ready to confront the many challenges that are certain to be thrown at us by Satan as we bring the Three Angel's Message?????

- 1. We live in a fallen world
- 2. We are in God's army
- 3. To do God's work (be it a job or church specific).
  - Sometimes our normal daily routine is stressful, but He will certainly enable you to "bloom where you are planted".
  - As we progress through each step in our walk with the Lord, He will bring new experiences that will increase our abilities for the next step in our walk.
  - When God has a change for us, He is an expert at making us uncomfortable where we are.

### 3. God's Work:

- 1. We live in a fallen world
- 2. We are in God's Army
- 3. To do God's work.

### 4. A Consequence of our sin

- This happens not only when we sin but also happens when we fail to follow the Lord's leading (be this because of open rebellion or just from lack of listening).
- We need consequences in our lives. As parents enforce consequences on their children, so God seeks to mold our character.

### 4. Consequences

- 1. We live in a fallen world.
- 2. We are in God's Army.
- 3. To do God's work.
- 4. A Consequence of our sin.
- **5. To chip away** things in our lives that do not conform to Christ's image and prepare us for His work here and eventually heaven.

### 5. Chip away:



• Let's consider an example from the life of Michealangelo.



- How did Michaelangelo view sculpturing?
- How did the rough-cut block become the statue of David?



How does God convert the old man into the image of Jesus?



### **Chipping away**

- The only thing we take to heaven from this life are our characters.
- Although God wants to bless us in this life, His main objective is to prepare us for heaven. He is doing everything within His perfect nature that does not step on our free wills.
- Shaping our characters and cleaning us up and readying us for heaven is a frequent cause of the struggles that we encounter in this life.
- God my use ugly experiences thrown at us by Satan, interactions with other people ("iron sharpens iron", our jobs, and any other life experience to teach and mold us.

- 1. We live in a fallen world
- 2. We are in God's Army
- 3. To do God's work.
- 4. A Consequence of our sin.
- 5. To chip away things.
- Difficulties are an inherent part of our job in God's vineyard.

- 6. Satanic opposition is to be expected if you are on the front lines saving souls and reclaiming ground taken by Satan.
  - The more effective your work, the greater the opposition regardless of your position from national conference presidents to volunteer laity.
  - If you or your organization is not taking back Satan's ground, you will not be greatly opposed.
  - An example of effective work: The Streams of Light ministry that has as its goal placing a copy of the Great Controversy into every hand in a city, country, continent. They describe many, many miracles of how God, frequently at the last moment, overcomes an attack of Satan.
  - Example of unopposed work: "name it, claim it" or "feel good" or "just love Jesus" churches are growing huge because they are not only not confronting Satan, but are instead supported by and working for Satan.

- 1. We live in a fallen world.
- 2. We are in God's Army
- 3. To do God's work.
- 4. A Consequence of our sin.
- 5. To chip away things.
- 6. Difficulties are an inherent part of our job.
- 7. To prepare us for future careers, tasks, crises, etc.

### 7. Prepare us



Our greatest learning frequently comes when we cannot fix things.

- Sometimes, God really needs to reinforce the lesson of complete trust in Him.
  - He might need to do something extra to get our attention.
  - Or, God may have very important lesson and blessing that He wants to be sure we don't miss.
- So, He allows some events to completely overwhelm us to the point where we see no way out and have no clue what to do next.
- What I, like you, want to do is to learn to ask God for leading and wisdom before I
  have that knee-jerk reaction and mess things up. Are you with me? Have you
  been there?
- When we run ahead of God, we may miss His lesson and can cause ourselves and/or others to lose God's intended blessing.



- So, ask ourself these questions:
  - What lesson or lessons is God trying to teach me during my current struggles?
  - Am I missing some lesson from God?
  - Do I need to stop doing and start praying and waiting for God's wisdom?
  - As repeated lessons may be increasingly uncomfortable, it is best to learn the first time(s) around.

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# **Prepare Us**

- God knows the optimum path to take us from where we are to where He wants us to be at life's end. This is the path of greatest blessing for us and perhaps others.
- God knows what additional lessons will be needed along our path to prepare us for future events such as a new career or important work in His vineyard.
- These lessons may be painful and stressful but this is often necessary to harden us to handle what lies ahead.

# Prepare Us – an Example

- Time between David's anointing and his becoming king was several years. During this time David's was studying for his PhD. in "kingship"...
  - God sent many lessons (e.g. Nabal & Abigale)
  - He was busy dodging spears and regularly experiencing God's wisdom and protection.
  - He faced many demands for strength, leadership, wisdom, etc.
  - A great read: Patriarchs and Prophets chapter titled "David a Fugitive" (PP 649)

# Patriarchs and Prophets: Ch 64, David a Fugitive

It was the providence of God that had connected David with Saul. David's position at court would give him a knowledge of affairs in preparation for his future greatness. It would enable him to gain the confidence of the nation. The vicissitudes and hardships which befell him, through the enmity of Saul, would lead him to feel his dependence upon God, and to put his whole trust in Him. And the friendship of Jonathan for David was also of God's providence, to preserve the life of the future ruler of Israel. In all these things God was working out His gracious purposes, both for David and for the people of Israel. (Read Chapter in Patriarchs and Prophets)

### [Commend entire chapter as it reveals

- · David's training as well as his growing support as a future king
- Situations where he failed to trust God, once with catastrophic results (Abimelech)

#### **Reasons for Life's Difficulties**

- 1. We live in a fallen world.
- 2. We are in God's Army
- 3. To do God's work.
- 4. A Consequence of our sin.
- 5. To chip away things.
- 6. Difficulties are an inherent part of our job.
- 7. To prepare us for future careers, tasks.
- 8. So that we can comfort others with the comfort we have received during similar experiences.
- **8. Comfort:** Gloria lost her first husband and was thus able to comfort others in a similar situation in ways that those that have not experienced that grief cannot understand.

#### **Review Questions #1**

- 1. Does God love us with a perfect love?
- 2. Since God exists equally in all time, does God know our struggles?
- 3. Could God easily prevent each and every challenge from coming?
- 4. Could God easily resolve your current struggles in an instant?
- 5. Though He promises wisdom and help through the struggles, He does not prevent or remove them! Agreed?
- 6. WHY? ...
- 7. Only conclusion: our struggles are for our ultimate good, perhaps for the good of others, and, always, for God's ultimate vindication and Glory!
- 8. Remember, God also knows what struggles needed to prepare us for future challenges! ←
- We live in a fallen world; so, bad things do happen to good people!
- However, God is still in control:
- · Given this, let's ask a few tough questions:
- ➤ Is this clear?

#### **Review Questions #2**

- 9. Again, does God know our problems?
- 10. If I focus on my problems, who is at the center of my life?
  - This is pride! (Sometimes called "Hidden pride.)"
  - This is worry! Worry greatly increases our stress level!
  - Stress takes years off our lives & lowers mental function.
- 11. Note the difference when we are letting go and letting God:
  - Worry and stress reduce, replaced with peace!
  - There is power in our prayers!
  - When we get self out of the way, God can work; sometimes in amazing and unexpected ways! ←

#### **Final Question**

Is God, the Master Potter, working on you?

- "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6)
- "But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)
- God knows what He is doing and it's for our good:
  - Embrace the trial.
  - Embrace the potter and allow Him to complete His work as He sees best!
- Are you in a time of testing? Is the master potter working on you?
- Remember...
- In the middle of his extreme trials, Job writes this promise that he will come forth as gold:
- We need to hang on to the thought that God knows best, and His purposes are to 1) save us; 2)ready us for heaven; and 3) so he can use us to labor with Him in His vineyard.
- Does this make sense?
- Here are some more thoughts from Hebrews 12 that may help you embrace the potter's work in your life.

#### **Hebrews 12:5-8**

# **Handling the Struggles**

"My son, do not despise the discipline of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; <sup>6</sup> for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." <sup>7</sup> If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? <sup>8</sup> But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons."

#### **God's Discipline and correction:**

- Means God has not given up on you, and you are still being treated as sons
- Should that not make us want to rejoice?
- "Rejoice always; again, I say rejoice." "In all things give thanks for this
  is the will of God for you."

#### **Hebrews 12:9-13**

# Handling the Struggles

Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days disciplined us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. discipline seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness!

#### "Shall we not much more readily be in subjection:

- Patiently?
- Without objection or complaining?
- Complaining says God is wrong and we know better. This borders on blasphemy.
- See Philippians 2:14.

# Looking Back on Struggles from Heaven

When we get to heaven, we will understand everything that confused us about God's plan in this life. We will get an explanation for the things that are hard to understand now. God will explain the mystery of His mercy and love. Where we now see only broken promises, we shall see the most perfect plan. We shall know that God in His love gave us the experiences that seem the most difficult. We will understand that God in His tender care all things work together for our good. Then we will rejoice with joy that can't be put into words. Our joy will be filled!



Let's see if we can bring this in for a landing.

- · Does all this make sense?
- Think before you answer. Are you able to accept the following truths?
- If we are all in agreement that God is in control, that He knows what He is doing in our lives, and what He chooses to allow in our lives is for our good, then let's briefly review the steps for dealing with trials.

## **A Strategy**

- Thank God for trials:
   "Rejoice always! Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you!"
   (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
- Rejoice in the trials, knowing that God has a plan:
   "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. <sup>4</sup> But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (James 1:2-4)

## **A Strategy**

 Remember that you won't be tested beyond what you are able to bear:

"There has no testing overtaken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tested above that you are able; but will with the testing also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." (Hebrews 10:12-13)



- Some of us have a tendency to run ahead of God to fix our own challenges without asking God for wisdom. (That would be me! Any of you?)
- We think: "this is minor, Lord, I've got this one" **or** "God, you're a busy man...".
- Being "Mister Fixit" frequently makes things worse. Have you been there?
- This running ahead of God is a typically male trait but is likewise an issue of those of us that have a strong Type-A personality. Any amens?



Here are some examples from David's life on the run where he failed to pray and allow God to lead:

- <u>Avenging himself</u> by planning to kill Nabal and all the males in Nabal's household. Fortunately, this was deterred by God inspiring wise action by Nabal's wife Abigail. (1 Samuel 25)
- Having to feign madness after fleeing to the enemy because he thought he needed to help God protect him.
- Causing the death of the high priest Abimelech plus 84 other men plus women and children <u>because trying to find his own hiding place and his men were hungry.</u> (1 Samuel 22:16-19).

# HAll Things Work Together for Good

- "In this life you will have tribulation."
- God in His great love custom tailors your life's tests and struggles so He can mold you for greater things now and for heaven.
- Remember that God knows what He is doing as you confront the hard times of life.
- In all things give thanks. It's His will.
- Understanding and applying these concepts to our lives is going to be increasing critical as we head into the last day events known as "the time of Jacob's trouble."
- In their writings since the reformation, what the Catholic church laments most having lost their ability to correct heretics. (Their correction included torture and burning at the stake.)
- Sabbath keepers will be tops on their list to correct in the last days.

# Put On the Whole Armor of God Read and digest Ephesians 6:10-18. →

- To survive the impending crisis of the last days, we must draw close to God and protect ourselves with His armor.
- Those thus remaining close to God will receive the outpouring of Holy Spirit as the "Latter Rain."
- What putting on the whole armor looks like in your life is between you and God.☺

# H

#### Put On the Whole Armor of God

"10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. 13 Therefore take up the **whole armor of God**, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, **to stand**."

# **Put On the Whole Armor of God**

"14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the **breastplate of righteousness**, <sup>15</sup> and having shod your feet with the preparation of the **gospel of peace**; <sup>16</sup> above all, taking the **shield of faith** with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. <sup>17</sup> And take the **helmet of salvation**, and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God; <sup>18</sup> praying always with all **prayer and supplication** in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints."

# So, Are you Ready to Let Go and Let God?

#### Let Go of what?

- Self, striving in our own strength
- Trying to figure it all out
- Anger, depression, frustration.

#### Let God what?

- Lead in all things
- Have total control
- Mold you into the image of Christ
- So, does sound like a good plan? Just slide over and let Christ drive?

### One more promise from Job

- "25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; <sup>26</sup> And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, <sup>27</sup> Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!!"
   (Job 19:25-27)
- Remember, Job wrote this in the middle of the worst trials ever documented.
- Can we do less that praise God for our struggles and recognize His sovereignty in our lives?



- Hang on! Hang on!
- This too will pass and quickly if we keep our eyes on heaven.
- Most students of end time events believe that very hard times are imminent (weeks, perhaps a few months).

#### 1 Thessalonians 4:

<sup>16</sup> "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. **And thus, we shall always be with the Lord.** Wherefore comfort each other with these words."



Ready for some fresh air in your life?
 Pray



\*\*\* Ask AV to leave projector on after the service \*\*\*