

What Am I to Do When Things Go Wrong?  
When Things Go Wrong, Part One  
Romans 8: 18  
May 16, 2010

Today, we start a new sermon series entitled, “When things Go Wrong.” You notice I didn’t say, “If” things go wrong,” because it is not a question of “If” but “when.” Personal experience tells us that. Everybody has had multiple negative experiences; usually, our philosophy is to not avoid things going wrong, but avoid them happening so close together!

The writers of the Old Testament confirm this all-too-common life event. In Isaiah chapter Five, Isaiah talks about the Lord’s vineyard, and he says, “*He looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.*” Then he goes on to say, “*He looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress,*”

So let’s begin our study of this universal experience, and ask probably the most important question we can ask ourselves: “What am I going to do when things go wrong?”

To find the answer from God’s Word, let’s turn to Romans Chapter Eight, and read Verses 18 – 23; we will focus on just Verse 18, but the rest of the section will help our understanding: (read)

1. If it is a case of “when” and not “if”, then **I should not be surprised when something has gone wrong and I am left to deal with the pain (Romans 8: 18a).**

A. What is present suffering? Suffering can often be sudden, without warning. Like Adam and Eve in the garden: Something went wrong; they suffered a sudden onset of spiritual indigestion; immediately they felt shame and nakedness. After experiencing God’s judgements, they were removed from the garden.

1. Leaving Paradise – now that’s painful!

B. We all experience pain – often it is caused by suffering brought into our life by evil in this world.

1. We shouldn’t be shocked or surprised by it; if we are, it can shake our faith.

2. In her memoir *Spoken From the Heart*, former First Lady Laura Bush writes of one of the life defining events in her life: as a new teenaged driver, she ran a stop sign and struck another car; a young friend was killed, in spite of Laura’s prayer to God to spare him. She says when God did not seem to respond to her prayer, the pain of the loss shook her faith to the core for many years.

3. That is the same danger for each of us if we are surprised by the depth or intensity of the pain we feel when things go wrong.

C. **Why should I not be surprised by pain?**

a. **We have a messed up planet (vs. 19 – 21).**

b. **We have messed up bodies (vs. 22 – 23).**

c. **We have messed up relationships (v. 35).**

2. If it is a case of “when” and not “if”, and I know pain comes with the “when,” **then I have learned I need to learn to put the pain in its proper perspective (v. 18b).**

A. The key words are... *“Present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory...”*

1. The reality of pain is certain and constant. But equally as sure for Believers is the promise something better is coming.

B. The secret is to look at the whole picture, not just a partial one.

1. A partial picture can shake my faith; it can cause me to fear the worst, or feel overwhelmed, or even feel defeated.

C. But look at what Scripture is telling us: the pain is bad now, but it pales in comparison to the glory our future holds for us.

1. The experience of childbirth is a good example. Giving birth is painful – perhaps the most intense, long-lasting pain known to humans. But the joy and thrill of that child being born is so much better than the temporary pain, the pain is quickly forgotten.

2. Otherwise, families would universally stop at one child!

3. **Pain is bad, but in comparison to the future, the good outweighs the bad (Isaiah 65: 17 – 19).**

3. If it is a case of “when” not “if”, and I now understand pain comes with the wrong that will happen, and I have learned I must focus on the whole picture and not on the partial, **I must focus my mind on the future God has for me**, because I will naturally focus on the present (v. 18c).

A. None of us here today can say we are so heavenly minded we are no earthly good; instead, our problem is just the opposite.

1. We are so wrapped up in the day-to-day, year-to-year grind of living and surviving, we can’t see beyond the end of our nose. It is difficult to think clearly about our heavenly home.

B. Yet I maintain that, if I cannot have the perspective of what God has promised for me in heaven, I am too susceptible to making decisions grounded in the physical world, and that is dangerous to my spirit.

1. If I am making decisions with my eventual destination in mind, I will certainly make different choices in many – if not all – cases.

So, when things go bad, what are you going to do? How will you react to the onset of physical, emotional, or spiritual pain? Do you believe the present suffering you are experiencing does not compare to the glory yet to be revealed?

Let’s pray!