

## A Verse to Live by

“The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble.  
He cares for those who trust in him,”

Nahum 1:7 (NIV)

### October Prayer Focus

Ask God to give you clarity to see Him working even in the hard times. Life may get bad, but God never does. We each should be asking how we can serve and grow during this pandemic. He is there, He loves you and He wants you to know that. Ask God to help you know and love Him more.

### Life Application Challenge

Write a list of the things God has done for you, from answered prayers to unexpected blessings. Sometimes we just need to remind ourselves how much God has done for us. Take some time

to look up verses that encourage you. If you are struggling with doubts and hurt, ask a trusted friend to pray with you. Life is hard indeed, and sometimes we need someone to come along beside us for support. But if we keep our struggles a secret, it is a harder battle. Trust me, you are not the only one that has felt what you are feeling right now.

### Recommended Scripture Reading

Romans 5 & 8 - These chapters are a great encouragement and reminder of God's love for us.

# Church On Fire!

Eleventh Street Church of God | October 2021 Prayer Newsletter

## Life is Hard, God is Good

Happy Fall my friends. If no one has told you lately let me say it, I love you.

Well, just as I had hoped, I am sure you were hoping this pandemic would be over by now, too. And here we are....still wearing masks, still social distancing, some still staying home, and some still struggling with fear and worry. We can quickly become discouraged, which can turn into despair and depression. It is easy to see the toll it is taking: angry people, wcruel words, broken relationships, and loss of faith. It can leave a person asking, "God, are you there?"

We hear the phrase "God is good" regularly in church. We often say it ourselves. The preacher says "God is good", and you respond "all the time". But do you just say it by rote? Do you really deep down know that? Do you really believe "...in all things God works for the good of those who love him..." (Ro. 8:28 NIV)? Is this true even in a pandemic, even when someone you love dies too young, or when troubles surround and you wonder if God has forgotten you?

I get it. You're hurting. You're disappointed. You're angry. You're about to throw in the towel on your faith. You don't understand. You want to yell "If God is so good, why is life so bad?" Too ashamed to share your deepest feelings with anyone for fear of judgment; you carry them around like a noose around your heart, choking any chance to feel contentment. You pretend everything is fine, not because you're fake, but because you don't want to seem self-pitying or whiney. I've been there, watching my son suffer from the ravages of brain cancer. A once muscular, healthy boy known for his strength, but he spent the last year of his life practically bedridden. Oh, how I know these feelings. You are not alone.

Let me assure you discouraged believer, you are loved by God and He cares deeply about you. That promise I mentioned, "...all things God works for the good of those who love him..." is proof of His love. He loves you so much that He will bring good even out of our trials, "...but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Ro. 5:3-5 ESV) He loves you so much that the Apostle Paul wrote these words, "...nothing can ever separate us from God's love." (Ro. 8:38 NIV)

Paul knew suffering. He was whipped, stoned, imprisoned, shipwrecked, and eventually killed. Yet he wrote, "Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted,

or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us." (Ro. 8:35 & 37 NIV) Paul, also called Saul, was an enemy of the early church. In Acts 9:1 we read, "... Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples." (NIV) How did he go from murderer to martyr? Because he had an encounter with Jesus that was followed by a relationship with Jesus. Jesus was no longer just that "self-professed savior" crucified on Golgotha. He became his personal Savior. Jesus called Paul by name and called out his sin, "... 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'" (Acts 9:4 NIV) And Paul responded to that call with obedience. He left that encounter not only blind but a changed man. No surprise he later wrote, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind," (Ro.12:2 ESV). He knew Jesus; he had a relationship with Him. He prayed, studied, and spent time in the presence of God. As a result, he grew to know his Savior more and more, which in turn led him to understand more and more just how good God is.

Jesus has called your name. Let's take another look at Romans 8:28, this time the whole verse, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." You, my friend, were called by Jesus! He has called out your sin. And if you repented, you "... have been justified by faith,..." and now "...have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ro. 5:1 ESV) God's goodness on display - you once carried the shame of sinning against your Creator, but "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Ro. 8:1 ESV) The more time you spend with Jesus in prayer, fasting, reading and studying the Bible, the more you will get to know Him. And the more you get to know Him, the more you will learn how good He is. With each answered prayer, with each touch of the Holy Spirit, with each victory, the goodness of God becomes clearer. And you will better understand what Paul meant when he wrote, "...I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.." (Phi. 3:8 ESV)

Life is hard, but God is good. And when life is going great, God is still better. Just as it did for Paul, God's goodness will outshine both the gain and the pain of this world. Because our final hope, our goal, the reason we keep up the grind, is the same as what kept Paul going - "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.." (2 Tim. 4:8)

Watching God Work,  
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