

The Search for Answers

One of the *downsides* of the “information age” is that we’ve become somewhat accustomed to or conditioned into thinking that there is an answer to every question, problem, circumstance, or predicament. There isn’t- at least not the kind of answer that we mistakenly assume and desire.

We want an *instant-fix* prescription, pill, procedure, or even just a diagnosis that explains “my problem” or “problems.” We want answers... and with them, solutions.

Perhaps we all get *there* sometimes; we may even feel like that’s *where* we live! Paul got there. This warrior of the Word not only wanted a *solution* to his “*thorn in the flesh*,” he earnestly prayed for it three times, 2Corinthians 12:7-8. We know *the answer* he wanted- “*that it might depart from me*.” Who wouldn’t feel and desire the same? But instead of getting *the answer* he wanted, note what he received:

- **Information** regarding the *purpose* of his affliction, “*to keep me from exalting myself*,” v.7; and, “*power is perfected in weakness*,” v.9b;
- **Assurance** that he, with reliance on God, could handle it; “*My grace is sufficient*,” v.9a;
- **Support** from “*the power of Christ*,” v.9d;

All of which, though not *the answer* for which he asked, enabled him to not only to *understand* and *cope*, but also to *rejoice* in, his tribulation, v.9c and v.10. Was his situation, and *the answer* given, is really any different from yours... or mine, cf. James 1:2-12?

I get it. Sometimes we’re like the infant that hurts: we may not know exactly what the problem is, let alone the solution to it, but a parent holding, comforting, and encouraging us helps tremendously. God is that parent, and its not only OK to “*cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’*” (Romans 8:15), it is entirely the right thing to do! But, we must understand that when we do, we might not get *the answer* we wanted. We might be told, as was Paul: *this is good for you* in the long run; with My help, you *can handle it*; and, not only should I *learn to live with it*, but I should *be happy* doing so.

Admittedly, there are some situations, circumstances, and experiences of our earthly sojourn for which there are just no satisfactory answers. “**Why?**” may not:

- **Have an answer we could understand even if it was provided**; “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,*’ declares the Lord. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts,*” Isaiah 55:8-9;
- **Be a question we even have a right to ask**; “*On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, ‘Why did you make me like this,’ will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?*” Romans 9:20-21.

However, when we find ourselves looking for answers, please understand two absolutely true and essential principles:

1. More often than not, we **need God more than we need answers**. In truth, the *lack of God* in our lives is usually the reason we’re wanting and needing answers! “*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you,*” Matthew 6:33. And,

2. Regardless of the situation, circumstance, or predicament for which we desire answers, the solution is always going to be: **Simply, do the right thing(s)**. What others have done or are doing to you, or even what you've done or are doing to yourself, start doing what God's Word says- and do it now! *"Becoming sober-minded and stop sinning," 1Corinthians 15:34; "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin," James 4:17.*

Finally, remember the admonition of 1Corinthians 10:13, *"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able; but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."* You don't have *the answers* to be able to navigate through life's maze of questions, but Jesus does- stick close to Him and He'll guide you home! (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)