

If The Lord wills – Sunday September 1st 2013.

“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.”¹⁴ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” (James 4:13-15)

Beloved in the Lord,

The Latvians have a saying – “Man thinks, but God does.” This saying has a truth within it, because ultimately no matter what man thinks, God does what He wills. He is God, and He does as He pleases. Everything, absolutely everything is dependent upon Him. When we really understand this, then we are truly blessed. True blessing and freedom in life comes when we understand and believe in the absolute sovereignty of God, and understand that we are completely dependent upon Him for all things.

How often do we stop and consider the truth that we are absolutely dependent upon God for all things? The very air we breathe, the fact that the sun rose this morning, that our heart is still beating is totally because God is controlling it. The sun rose because God commanded it too. Your heart is beating because God has told it too.

I love reading the book of Job, especially the closing chapters, because they point out Gods magnificence and mans relative insignificance. Man is but a speck in God’s creation, and all our knowledge and understanding is but a drop in the ocean. In the last chapters of Job, God asks Job a series of questions, for which Job has no answer. We read for example:

***“Now gird up your loins like a man,
And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!***

⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell Me, if you have understanding,

⁵ Who set its measurements? Since you know.

Or who stretched the line on it?

⁶ “On what were its bases sunk?

Or who laid its cornerstone,

⁷ When the morning stars sang together

And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

⁸ “Or who enclosed the sea with doors

When, bursting forth, it went out from the womb;

⁹ When I made a cloud its garment

And thick darkness its swaddling band,

¹⁰ And I placed boundaries on it

And set a bolt and doors,

¹¹ ***And I said, 'Thus far you shall come, but no farther;
And here shall your proud waves stop'?***

¹² ***"Have you ever in your life commanded the morning,
And caused the dawn to know its place,***

¹³ ***That it might take hold of the ends of the earth,
And the wicked be shaken out of it?***

¹⁴ ***"It is changed like clay under the seal;
And they stand forth like a garment.***

¹⁵ ***"From the wicked their light is withheld,
And the uplifted arm is broken. " (Job.38:3-15)***

This is just a small sampling of the questions that God asks Job. About halfway through God's questioning Job says: ***"Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth."*** (Job 40:3)

God then continues on with His questions regarding Creation. When God finally stops asking questions; Job responds:

***"I know that You can do all things,
And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.***

³ ***'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'
Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."***

⁴ ***'Hear, now, and I will speak;
I will ask You, and You instruct me.'***

⁵ ***"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;
But now my eye sees You;***

⁶ ***Therefore I retract,
And I repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:2-6)***

The end result was, that God restored to Job all that he had lost and gave him so much more. Job had to experience a lot of loss, pain and grief, before he came to the right confession that: **God can do all things, And that no purpose of His can be thwarted.**

The question then is: have we come to this confession? Do we so understand God and trust in Him, that we totally believe that He is in control, and no plan or purpose of His can be thwarted?

This is an extremely important question, as it reveals to us how we view God, and that in turn affects the way we live. A person who does not understand that God can do all things and that no plan of His can be thwarted will always be in a state of conflict with God. They will say things like God has rejected me; or He is punishing me in some way for my life.

If you are a child of God, if you have accepted Jesus into your heart, then God does not punish you, He will never reject you, He will never forget you.

Over and over we see this truth in the Holy Scriptures. For example we read in Psalm 121:

“I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;

From where shall my help come?

² My help comes from the Lord,

Who made heaven and earth.

³ He will not allow your foot to slip;

He who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ Behold, He who keeps Israel

Will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The Lord is your keeper;

The Lord is your shade on your right hand.

⁶ The sun will not smite you by day,

Nor the moon by night.

⁷ The Lord will protect you from all evil;

He will keep your soul.

⁸ The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in

From this time forth and forever.

Personally, I find this Psalm very comforting, because it reminds us that God is our help, He never slumbers nor sleeps. He is the Creator of the Heavens and the earth and all that is within it.

It is so very important to remind ourselves of this truth often. Reading Psalms like this, strengthens our faith and takes our focus off ourselves and sets our sight firmly on God.

Another text I find very helpful is Romans 8:28

“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.”

We need to underline the words **“all things”**. All things work together for good to those who love God. All things means precisely that – all things. Yes even the trials, the illnesses, the difficulties. If God allows us to experience difficulties and trials we can be sure that He is working them for our good. The Bible says so. We may not see nor feel the good, but God has promised it, and His Word is sure and true.

Faith simply confesses: “ I 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.”

Some translations say according to His eternal purpose. Here again we meet up with God's sovereignty. His eternal purpose. Do you realise that God had your life planned even before you were born? He knew everything about you, before you came into this life. He has had an eternal purpose for you and it is being worked out in your life as we speak.

This can be a hard concept to grasp, because we are human and our ability to comprehend and understand is severely limited. God is God, He is not a man, and He know all things.

In Psalm 139 we read: ***"For You formed my inward parts;***

You wove me in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

Wonderful are Your works,

And my soul knows it very well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You,

When I was made in secret,

And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;

¹⁶ Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;

And in Your book were all written

The days that were ordained for me,

***When as yet there was not one of them."* (Ps.139:13-16)**

There are many other Scriptures that teach the same truth. What I am trying to get across to you today is that we need to learn to surrender everything to our loving Heavenly Father. I tend to call this a conscious surrender, a conscious trust.

We need to constantly pray: Take Thou my Hand and lead me, Over life's rough way, With Heavenly manna feed me from day to day; Without Thy grace and favour, I go astray; Take Thou my hand O saviour, choose Thou my way.

Amen

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.