

WHAT IS OUR COMFORT IN ADVERSITY?

John 7:25-36

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In October 2017, my wife's mother passed away. This hit my family hard, because we were very close to her. She was Lydia's best friend. She had close relationships with the kids and loved on them. And she was a core member of our church.
2. Just a couple of weeks after her death, I woke up with shortness of breath. My doctor couldn't figure it out, and it wasn't going away. So, I started struggling with anxiety, and this prevented me from concentrating at work, and from sleeping at night. This led to greater anxiety, which made the shortness of breath worse, and then to chest pains. I thought something was deadly wrong with me. I saw every specialist you could see. Finally, the ENT diagnosed me with LPR – Laryngopharyngeal Reflux Disease – also known as Silent Reflux. It is similar to acid reflux, but instead of it causing heartburn, it does its damage in your throat. It can lead to all sorts of problems, such as losing your voice, inability to swallow, and shortness of breath. Unfortunately, Silent Reflux is not something that you can easily fix. It is a chronic disease – it lasts a long time – sometimes never going away. You have to drastically change your lifestyle to defeat it. It is 2021, and while I've come a long way, I'm still not cured.
3. Christians are not immune from trials.
4. One of the most destructive, yet commonly held myths is that the more godly you are, the less adversity you will face. Adversity is punishment for sin, and it can be overcome with godliness and faith. If you are having problems, it is because you are living in sin, or you don't have enough faith. But this is a lie. All you have to do is read the Bible to figure that out. All throughout Scripture, very godly people experienced trials and tribulations, sometimes to the death. Eleven of the twelve apostles were executed. All you have to do is read up on church history to know that godly people are not immune from trials. Consider the story of John Huss. John Huss was one of the earliest reformers. He preached against indulgences a century before Martin Luther. He preached that Scripture was the final authority, not the Pope, and that to rebel against an erring pope is to obey Christ. He was excommunicated, imprisoned, and burned at the stake. Christians are not immune from trials.
5. Nevertheless, Christians can take comfort in the face of adversity. We can have joy in the midst of trials. We can be confident during the storms of life. We may suffer, but we don't have to despair. We may hurt, but we don't have to lose hope.
6. This morning I want to teach you the Christian's comfort in adversity.

II. TEXT: John 7:25-36

25 Some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?
26 Yet, look, he's speaking publicly and they're saying nothing to him. Can it be true that the authorities know he is the Messiah? 27 But we know where this man is from. When the Messiah comes, nobody will know where he is from."

28 As he was teaching in the temple, Jesus cried out, "You know me and you know where I am from. Yet I have not come on my own, but the one who sent me is true. You don't know him; 29 I know him because I am from him, and he sent me."

30 Then they tried to seize him. Yet no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come. 31 However, many from the crowd believed in him and said, "When the Messiah comes, he won't perform more signs than this man has done, will he?"

32 The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things about him, and so the chief priests and the Pharisees sent servants to arrest him.

33 Then Jesus said, "I am only with you for a short time. Then I'm going to the one who sent me. 34 You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come."

35 Then the Jews said to one another, "Where does he intend to go that we won't find him? He doesn't intend to go to the Jewish people dispersed, among the Greeks and teach the Greeks, does he? 36 What is this remark he made: 'You will look for me, and you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come'?"

1. I want us to focus on **John 7:30**. "Then they tried to seize him. Yet no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come."
2. Let me point out three reasons to take comfort when life is hard.

III. **THREE REASONS TO TAKE COMFORT WHEN LIFE IS HARD**

1. **God is sovereign over adversity.**

- i. All three reasons revolve around God's sovereignty.
- ii. What is the sovereignty of God? Nothing happens without God's knowledge, permission, and assistance, and He works everything together according to His perfect plan. In short, God controls all things. God is in charge of all things.
- iii. **Ephesians 1:11** "In him we have also received an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will"
- iv. In John 7:30 we are reminded that God is sovereign over adversity.
- v. The Jewish leaders hated Jesus. They wanted to arrest Him. They wanted to silence Him. They wanted to punish Him. They wanted to kill Him and erase His memory from the earth. And here they tried to seize him, but they didn't lay a hand on Him. They didn't touch Him. Not because they didn't want to, but because "His hour had not yet come." In other words, there was an invisible hand guarding Christ, and nothing adverse could happen to Him unless that hand allowed it. Christ could not be killed unless and until God allowed it.

- vi. God is sovereign over adversity. Nothing bad can happen to you without His knowledge, permission, and assistance.
- vii. **John 3:27** John responded, “No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven.”
- viii. **Exodus 4:11** “The LORD said to him, “Who placed a mouth on humans? Who makes a person mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?”
- ix. **Lamentations 3:38** “Do not both adversity and good come from the mouth of the Most High?”
- x. **1 Samuel 2:7** “The Lord brings poverty and gives wealth; he humbles and exalts.”
- xi. God is sovereign over adversity. Nothing bad can happen to you without His knowledge, permission, and assistance.
- xii. You can’t get sick without God’s permission. You can’t suffer financial loss without God’s permission. Your car can’t break down without God’s permission. You can’t catch COVID-19 without God’s permission. You can’t fail without God’s permission. You can’t fall without God’s permission. You can’t have marriage problems without God’s permission. You can’t get laid off without God’s permission. You can’t lose an election without God’s permission. You can’t get cancer without God’s permission.
- xiii. I am suffering from silent reflux because God is allowing it. It under His control. And any time you suffer, it is only with God’s permission.

2. God is sovereign over evil people.

- i. The Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus, but they couldn’t lay a hand on Him without God’s permission.
- ii. God doesn’t just control what happens to you, but He controls what wicked people do to you. He never causes evil, but He sometimes allows wicked people to commit evil acts. But no evil can befall you but what God permits.
- iii. We see this in the story of Job, a very righteous man of God. The devil wanted to attack Job to prove that the reason for his devotion was that his life was good; but if he experienced adversity, then he would curse God. So, God allowed Satan to attack job, but with stipulations. At first, God said that Satan could strike everything he owned, but not lay a hand on job. So, Satan proceeded and took away all of Job’s possessions, but Job remained faithful to God. Then Satan said that the only reason for Job’s devotion was that God was guarding his health; take that away and surely Job would curse God. So, the Lord allowed Satan to attack Job’s health, but to spare his life. So, Satan proceeded to attack Job’s health, but still he remained faithful to God. On the one hand, Job’s example illustrates how we should respond to adversity – with endurance and faithfulness. On the other hand, this story illustrates that God is in control over the wicked. Not even the devil, in all his power, could do any harm to Job without God’s permission.

- iv. **Job 42:2** “I know that you can do anything and no plan of yours can be thwarted.”
- v. Evil people cannot touch you without God’s knowledge and permission.
- vi. You cannot be persecuted without His permission. You cannot be sued, or robbed, or discriminated against, or even lied to without God’s permission. You cannot be insulted, or slandered, or gossiped about without God’s permission. You cannot be cheated without God’s permission.
- vii. A couple of years ago I was shopping at Mardel when someone hit my truck in the parking lot and took off. There happened to be an off-duty police officer in the parking lot who witnessed the whole thing, and he wrote down the license plate of the perpetrator. When the police arrived, I conveyed all of this information to them – the license plate of the perpetrator, and the name and phone number of the off-duty police officer. It should have been a slam-dunk case. They should have been able to catch the criminal and prosecute him. He should have been forced to pay for the damage to my vehicle. But when I went to the police station a few days later to pick up the police report, all it said was that I was the victim of a hit-and-run. There was nothing in the report about the license plate of the perp, or about the off-duty officer who witnessed the entire incident. So, they never caught the guy, and I had to pay for the damage myself. I was a victim of evil – a hit-and-run, and pathetic, if not shady police work. But none of that happened by chance. It wasn’t bad luck. God knew about it before it happened. He saw it happen. And He allowed it to happen.
- viii. **Proverbs 16:4** “The Lord has prepared everything for his purpose – even the wicked for the day of disaster.”
- ix. God is sovereign over evil people. No evil can befall you but what God allows.

3. God is sovereign over death.

- i. **John 7:30** “Then they tried to seize him. Yet no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come.”
- ii. His “hour” refers to His death. The Jewish leaders were ready to kill Jesus, but they could not touch Him because it wasn’t time for Christ to die yet. God had more for Christ to do first.
- iii. God is sovereign over your death. You cannot die without God’s permission.
- iv. **1 Samuel 2:6** “The Lord brings death and gives life; he sends some down to Sheol, and he raises others up.”
- v. **Daniel 5:23** “But you have not glorified the God who holds your life-breath in his hand and who controls the whole course of your life.”
- vi. You cannot die unless and until God is ready for you to die. In that sense, you are invincible. You have a force field around you preventing your death. It doesn’t matter the weapon or the foe, you cannot be killed until God is

ready. It doesn't matter if it is cancer, or COVID-19, or a bullet, or nuclear bomb – you cannot die without God's permission.

- vii. God is sovereign over adversity. God is sovereign over evil people. God is sovereign over death.
- viii. What is our comfort in adversity? Nothing can happen to you unless God allows it.

IV. ALTERNATIVES TO THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

1. The Biblical doctrine of God's sovereignty rules out two alternatives:

i. The Biblical doctrine of God's sovereignty rules out Deism.

- 1. Some of the founding fathers of our nation were known to be deists.
- 2. Deism is the view that God created the world, but He is not ruling over the world. He is not in charge. He does not intervene in human affairs.
- 3. **Wayne Grudem** "Deism teaches that God created the world and then essentially abandoned it."
- 4. **New Dictionary of Theology** "The deists conceived of God as detached from the present workings of the universe, since he had created it and left it to operate like a machine. Providence asserts the personal involvement of God in every turn of human affairs, and his constant upholding of all natural processes."
- 5. God is not uninvolved. He is not unaware. He is not uncaring. He is not busy doing His own thing. He is in charge and in control. He knows and sees everything that happens. And He either causes, or guides, or allows everything that happens.

ii. The Biblical doctrine of God's sovereignty also rules out atheism.

- 1. Atheism is the belief that there is no God.
- 2. There is no God who is watching everything; there is no God who is controlling everything; there is no God who can prevent anything; there is no God who can guard you from anything. There is no God who can work it all out for the good. There is no overarching plan that we are a part of. Everything is meaningless.
- 3. The Bible teaches there is an almighty, all-knowing, sovereign God who controls all things.
- 4. **Chuck Swindoll** "Anything under God's control is never out of control."
- 5. **ESV Study Bible** "God has absolute rule over creation as King and total control and determination over all that happens."
- 6. There is no such thing as luck. There is no such thing as fortune. There is no such thing as chance. God controls it all.

7. **Arminius** said of God's sovereignty "It preserves, regulates, governs and directs all things, and that nothing in the world happens fortuitously or by chance."
8. **Charles Stanley** "From Genesis to Revelation, here's the central message: God Almighty, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God, the Triune God is in control of all things, period."
9. **Tony Evans** "Our God is sovereign. That means there's no such thing as luck. Anything that happens to you, good or bad, must pass through His fingers first. There are no accidents with God. I like the story of the cowboy who applied for health insurance. The agent routinely asked him, 'Have you ever had any accidents?' The cowboy replied, 'Well no, I've not had any accidents. I was bitten by a rattlesnake once, and a horse did kick me in the ribs. That laid me up for a while, but I haven't had any accidents.' The agent said, 'Wait a minute. I'm confused. A rattlesnake bit you, and a horse kicked you, Weren't those accidents?' 'No, they did that on purpose.'"
10. There is no such thing as coincidence. **Coincidence is when God chooses to remain anonymous.**

V. WHY IS THIS THE CHRISTIAN'S COMFORT

1. Why is it comforting to know that God is sovereign; that nothing can happen to us without His permission?
2. Because of who God is. God is love.
3. God is not just sovereign. He is love. He is not just almighty. He is love. He is not just all-knowing. He is love. He is not just in control and in charge. He is love. God loves you. And that means that whatever He allows to happen to you, whether adversity, or evil, or death, it is for your good.
4. **Romans 8:28** "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."
5. We won't always understand why God allows us to experience adversity. It may be to grow us, or to teach us, or for some bigger purpose. But for us to have comfort in adversity we don't need to know why, we just need to know God. He is sovereign, and He loves us.
6. **B.B. Warfield** "A firm faith in the universal providence of God is the solution of all earthly troubles."

VI. CONCLUSION

1. I don't know why God is allowing me to suffer with LPR. I've prayed for healing countless times. Just about every day for several years. I don't know what God is up to. But I can comfort knowing that God is in control, and He loves me. And that brings me great comfort in my adversity.
2. I don't know all the ways that you have suffered, and are suffering, and will suffer in the future. And I probably won't be able to tell you why. All I know is that you will

suffer, no matter how godly you are. And I know that God is sovereign. Nothing can happen to you without His permission. And He loves you.