

GOD is SO GOOD!

I have been thinking over the past few days about many things that have seemed to come up within my life recently. I am quite sure that I am not the only one who has experienced such things lately. Many of us have gone through and continually go through many things that seem to be very difficult. Each one of us would rather that these things would just simply “go away.” Unfortunately, they don’t.

However, as many of us know – that is simply how life is. Just as we offer simply, simple worship unto the Lord; so is life – it is simply how life is. It is an up and down roller-coaster that takes each one of us on a “wild ride” through this life. There are always “ups and downs.” However, the one thing that has always come to my attention as I go through this life is the fact that God has been, is and always will be there for me. Yes, God is so very, very good.

Notice, that I said that God is so very, very good. That doesn’t necessarily mean that our lives are always “a bed of roses.” No, unfortunately, life is just that, a roller-coaster ride. Each of us will experience and we do experience those moments when we are “on top of the world.” Then we seem to wander off and reach the lowest depths that we could possibly reach. We must realize that this is just what life is and what it is all about. Why? It is because of our human frailties of truly misunderstanding the true love of our God.

The Bible is very clear on this. In the Old Testament we read of the “ups and downs” of the Israelites as they journeyed through the time of Abraham to the very end of the times of the Old Testament in both Ezra and Nehemiah. If you know your Bible then you will understand what I am talking about.

Ezra and Nehemiah speak of the time when the children of Israel returned from their captivity from the Babylonians. After the Babylonians were defeated by the Medo-Persian Empire, the Jewish people were allowed (miraculously) to return back to Jerusalem. This all happened under the reigns of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, the Persian Kings who had defeated Babylon and ruled during that time period.

However, it was God who was actually behind it all. Yes, it was God who delivered the Jewish people, time and time again, and this time they were allowed to return back to Israel after they were taken away captive by the Babylonians. The Medes conquered the Babylonians which opened the door for the Jews to return.

After this time period we have about 400 years of “silence” in the scriptures. We do know of the Maccabees who did get their land back (Jerusalem and the Temple Mount) for a season. However, the Jewish people wandered from the things of God (again) and because of that, they were once again taken captive this last time by the Romans. They were allowed to stay but under Roman rule. That is where we pick it up in the New Testament when we read of the coming of the Jesus in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

We know that there were these “ups and downs” from the beginning of the Bible as we read of Adam and Eve. They had it all but yet they were deceived into thinking that God was holding back on them. What did they do – they ate of the fruit and sin entered the world. They lost the glory of God but instead of God destroying them, He allowed them to live on and gave His creation a “second chance.” We see that from that time, through the time of Abraham, the Judges and then the Kings of Judah and of Israel, the lives of God’s people went through some turbulent times – there were victories and there were defeats.

What we really get out of the Old Testament is that God’s people were always given the opportunity to turn back to Him and to let Him, “be their God.” That was ultimately, the only term of the covenant that His people needed to keep – to simply “let God be their God.” That was the only term of the covenant that God gave the people to do. Unfortunately, they could not do it. God would be their God and He would take care of them and all their needs would be met if they would just simply let God be their God.

They could not do it. Oh sure they may have kept that part of the covenant when the times got tough. They would return and cry out to God. However, once God had delivered them and they were set free from whatever bondage they were in, they would gradually turn away from God. They would start to take over and do things their own way which ultimately took them away from God. We see this happening throughout the Old Testament.

Then we see God send His only begotten Son to this lost world. Jesus' life was a life that showed us what it really meant to be a follower of God; what it really meant to be a true child of God. He showed us God's love and His truth – the reality of His Word. He taught us what God's Word really said. He showed us how we could live under God's Word and be blessed by it.

Jesus then died for all of us. He took our punishment in which we all deserved but He took it for us. However, death could not hold the true Son of God. Jesus did the ultimate thing that would give us new life – He rose from the dead. He presented to the Father the gifts of new life on that Resurrection Sunday. He returned to this earth to be with His disciples for 40 days. However, He returned back into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of the Father waiting to return back to this earth.

Until Jesus returns, all those who truly believe in everything that He had done and who truly believe in who He is, has now been born again. We have been born again through our belief in Jesus and our spirit has now been "made alive." We have been given the Holy Spirit to now lead us and guide us through this life. We have been given the "Fruit of the Holy Spirit" within us to now live our lives as true children of God. He has given to each of us, as needed, the "Gifts of the Holy Spirit" to help our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord as the need arises.

Yes, God is so very, very good.

However, the question that keeps coming up to my mind is the one that states, Why do I need the Old Testament now that I am a true "born-again" believer in Jesus? The answer, to me is very obvious. I need to look at everything in the Old Testament to truly help me to see who I truly am in and through Jesus. I see this in two ways as presented to me in the Old Testament.

The first thing is that in the first five books of the Old Testament we see that the Law was given. We are taught that the Law was given to show us that we could never keep the Law so we needed a Savior. This is true. However, it is still "the Law." We could never keep the Law because we were basically sinful people. In other words, we were people who were **full of sin**. Why? It was because we did not keep to God's Word. Now that we are children of God with a renewed spirit there is absolutely no reason why my life should not take the precepts and principles found in the Law and now live them out as a true child of God.

In other words, I do not live under the Law but rather now I live by the Law. The Ten Commandments spoken by God to Moses showed the people how the lifestyle of the true child of God should look like. Yes, I may mess it up at times but that is where God's grace and mercy come in. That is where the Holy Spirit now comes into my life and leads and guides me back into the ways of God. The Law is still here to lead and guide me into living the lifestyle of a true child of God. When I say or use the term "law" I am referring to the Ten Commandments. This now should come naturally to me as a child of God.

Actually, Jesus gives us this "Law" in simpler terms. He told His disciples and therefore all of His believers today, that we are *"to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind"* and *"to love thy neighbor as thyself."* (Matthew 22:37, 39; Luke 10:27) Jesus tells us that on these two commandments "hangs" everything else that the Law tells us to do. It is simple but it is still the Law.

Unfortunately, in today's world many people do not want to follow God's ways. They take the misunderstanding of God's grace and therefore they throw out the rest of God's Word. That is very dangerous. The New Testament never tells us to rid ourselves of the Law. If anything it tells us that now, as a child of God, I am to now live out the precepts of the Law in my life – not as a thing of bondage but rather as a thing of pure freedom and joy. I can now love God and love others as He had intended me to.

The second thing that the Old Testament shows me is that it is so very simple to start believing in the things of God, but it is so very difficult to **continually live it out throughout my life** until the day when I finally pass on from this life into eternity. As mentioned previously, throughout the Old Testament we see the people of God on a constant roller-coaster ride of going up and down as far as their walk with the Lord is concerned. Even the great men in the Old Testament have this up and down life as far as being a follower of God. They do wonderful things and are great men of faith one minute and then they fail the next minute.

This is again where I need to look at the Old Testament and learn from it. My life must stay on the right course throughout my life. It must be a constant source for others to see the Kingdom of God working in and through. However, let's face it. It doesn't always do this. This is where God's grace and mercy comes into full view and this is where my salvation in and through Jesus takes center stage.

I cannot always be the perfect man. I still have many "bad areas" and I am just going to say it – I still have many sinful ways in my life. Many of those sinful ways are the main cause of many of my difficulties that I am experiencing these days. I have not yet fully grasped who I really am in Christ. However, I want to get to that place. I am continually seeking after my God's help, His direction and His guidance in my life.

However, I have also come to realize that things "just happen" to us all. There are situations that simply will arise in one's life whether they are a child of God or not. Let's face it, things happen. They happen whether you are a child of God or you are not. We can say that it is the devil's fault or we can say that it is my fault. The truth of the matter is that in any situation it could be either the devil's attack against me or it could simply be something that I am the cause of. Or it could be simply life in general. We must know that "life is life" and things simply happen.

We read of the terrible earthquakes that are taking place. We hear of the dreadful news of war between Ukraine and Russia. We hear of the threats made by China. We hear of the events that are taking place in Israel, and the list goes on. You hear of the events that are taking place around you and in the lives of those you love. The truth of the matter is that life goes on and it can be either good or bad even if you are a child of God.

Does that make God irrelevant? Does it make it seem to you, when you look at all these things that are taking place, that God is nowhere to be found and that He is taking a nap somewhere? The truth of the matter is that God is right in the midst of it all.

I had mentioned earlier in this writing that there was 400 years of "silence" between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Oh yes, life went on and things happened throughout the world for those 400 years. But then... Jesus came. God's timing was and still is perfect. We may be going through a time of silence. Remember, just as "God's 400 year silence" ended with the fulfillment of His promise of the Messiah through the birth of Jesus, His silence will soon be broken with another fulfillment of His Word – the second coming of Jesus.

If we look in the scriptures there are still 7 years left in God's time frame of what will take place prior to that second coming and Jesus' rule in the millennial time. Let's take a quick look at this in Daniel. The "seventy weeks" prophecy found in Daniel 9 is one of the most significant and detailed Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. As Daniel prayed, the angel Gabriel appeared to him and gave him a vision of both, Israel's and the world's future.

In Daniel 9:24, we hear Gabriel tell Daniel, "*Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city.*" Almost all commentators agree that the seventy "sevens" should be understood as seventy "weeks" of years, or in other words, a period of 490 years. The prophecy goes on to divide the 490 years into three smaller units - one of 49 years, one of 434 years, and one 7 years. Without going into it in great detail (you can look it up yourself), we can safely say, and many Bible teachers and scholars agree, that of the 70 "sevens," 69 have been fulfilled already in history.

That leaves 7 years left. Most scholars believe that we are now living in a "gap" between the "69th week" and the "70th week." The prophetic clock has been "paused," as it were. Why would it be "paused?" I believe it is paused and the reason why God is so silent is because He is giving man the chance to turn to Him and acknowledge Him for who He is – the one true God – before it is too late. However, we must always be aware that the final 7 years **will** come. The final "seven" years of Daniel is commonly referred to as the tribulation period or the end times. They **will** come.

So what does that have to do with me and my life, and the things that I have been experiencing and going through? Well, to be honest, I believe it has much to do with me and my life. Yes, things will happen. The "ups and downs" will be a continuous cycle until the day when I am with the Lord. What I must concentrate on are those "down" times. I must continually strive at getting out of and staying out of those times and staying in those "up" times.

I must continually keep my heart and my mind focused on the many, many good things that God has done and given to me and what I am to do from here on. The most important gift that I have been given is the gift of eternal life. Yes, I will be with my God – the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. God has given me a wonderful wife and family, as well as wonderful people of God in my life.

However, until that time comes when I am with Him, I need to continually turn my attention and my focus on the things of God and not on the things of self or the flesh. I must continually love the Lord my God with all my heart and soul – with all that is within me. I must continually love my brothers and sisters in the Lord. I must continually share my God's love with those who may not know Him and try to draw them into His love for them. We must all do this!!!

Life is simply life. But yes, God is sooooo..... good!!!