

“REST ASSURED, THERE IS A PURPOSE AND AN END”

by Rom A. Pegram (11/13/16)

A few years ago, I had bypass surgery. During that time, I learned several things about the procedure and have studied it some since, too. Following heart surgery, one of the medical staff's main concerns for their patients is to keep the lungs clear. And, there are 3 major ways they do that...

- First, they have you breathe moist salt air...
- Second, they have nurses who beat a kind of rhythm on your back, which loosens the fluids within you, and...
- Third, they have you cough...

Now breathing moist salt air is like standing on a boardwalk at the ocean; it's not an altogether unpleasant experience. And having a lovely nurse pound on your back very gently, rhythmically—that's not altogether unpleasant. I mean, let's face it, it's kind of like a massage. But the third way of keeping the lungs clear is another question altogether. *When your sternum has been split from the top to the bottom, when your rib cage has been pulled open, and when pain is walking along every nerve of your thorax, you don't want to move your chest.* But they want you to cough. O.K., so here's the part where the nurse comes in and says, “Now it's time for *us* to do *our* coughing. You know it's not *our* coughing; it's *your* coughing. It hurts, and you feel very cut off; no one can seem to take the pain away; no one really understands, at this point, what you're going through...

Folks, that's exactly what Jesus experienced that day on the cross. It wasn't only a time of pain, but it was a time of *lonely* pain. If you've ever experienced real pain, it has a way of capturing you, isolating you, and separating you. There's a profound loneliness in physical pain. And, it's *that* kind of a bad day Jesus was going through! Maybe some of you have had those kind of bad days...

- ... Where you felt like you were isolated—all alone in what you were going through...
- ... Where you wondered what it was all about, asking ‘Why do I have to go through this?’
- ... Where you wondered if the day would *ever* come to an end...

If you've ever had those kind of days, know this: *Jesus understands exactly what you're going through ... or have been through.* And something else: I have nothing but good news for you today, if you're wondering how to get through bad days like this ... or help others do the same! Listen, now, to today's scripture lesson (John 19:30, TEV)...

“Jesus drank the wine and said, ‘It is finished!’ Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

In these words from Jesus, two things become apparent: 1) *something* was finished (or almost finished) and 2) there was going to be an end to whatever it was! So, what was going on here? What was Jesus talking about? He was talking about the work of salvation that was taking place on the cross! God's major plan in the life of humanity, of which Jesus was a major player, was just about to be completed. Humanity was just

about to be reconciled to God. The wedge in our relationship with God was just about to be removed ... and we, then, would be able to live with God for eternity! The word “It is finished!” gives us two important lessons to learn, while trying to get through our bad days of life. Here are the lessons or take-aways for today...

GOD HAS A PURPOSE FOR EVERY LIFE. In the words “It is finished!” (Greek = *tetelesthai*), we hear ringing loud and clear that there was a purpose to all of this—to Jesus’ excruciating death on the cross. Something much bigger than Jesus himself was about to be completed—some *purpose!*

Let me ask you something: When it comes to going through bad days—tough or challenging times of our life, doesn’t it make it just a little bit easier to get through those times if we know that it’s not *for no reason at all* that we’re going through them?

I think of the ten years I was in school—from about 28-38 years old—and how many times that Jane and I would have loved to ‘throw in the towel.’ This was not a normal life God had called us to. Most 28-year-olds are not going back to college full-time, with a family to raise and support. But, I was...

- There were many times, while driving home after second shift, that I began to have thoughts about how difficult the life was I was leading...
- There were many times, while sleeping all day Saturdays because of the exhaustion of the week’s schedule that I wondered what a normal Saturday with your family would be like...
- There were many times, when my children had evening programs at church or at school and I had to work, that I wondered why this life was happening to me and why my wife and children had to pay the price...

But, each time I would have thoughts like these, I would soon remember *Who* it was who called me to this life—that the *purpose* of my going through what I was going through was much bigger than Rom ... or Jane ... or Josh ... or Rachel...

Having a *purpose* makes what we go through sometimes more bearable. Knowing that there is a very good reason—perhaps an eternal reason—for what we’re currently experiencing sometimes helps us to get through those bad days.

Jesus’ example on the cross shows us that very thing. And, folks, when we’re walking with God—just like Jesus was, we can rest assured God has a purpose for our lives. What we’re going through—NO MATTER HOW BAD THE DAY—is a part of God’s much grander plan for this world ... and for the world to come. And, we’re a part of it ... as we walk with God. Knowing that can help you get through just about *any* bad day that life throws your way! It did for Jesus and it can for us...

Here’s the second important lesson we can learn from Jesus’ words on the cross today...

GOD HAS A DESIGNATED END FOR EVERY STAGE OR EXPERIENCE OF LIFE.

Go back and read Ecclesiastes 3 sometime; it’ll remind you of this very important lesson from Jesus. To everything, there is a season ... and I will add to that writer’s list, this morning, that there is a time for a beginning and a time for an end. As we walk with God—as Jesus did, we’ll find out that in everything God allows in our lives (bad days,

etc.), there is a beginning and an end! 1) We need to let *that* truth be a comfort to us! I mean, sometimes we're in the midst of our 'bad days' and we think those days ... or times ... will *never* end! Have you ever had times like that in *your* life? Let me give you a little example...

I don't know about you, but one of the places I've always (and probably will always) dread going to is the dentist's office. I grew up in a family of five children and we used to hate going to the dentist so badly that we'd nickname our dentists. I remember one, in particular, we began calling 'Banana Fingers,' because his hands were so large and it hurt every time he'd put them in your mouth to do something. Some of you remember those days ... before all of the sealing of teeth like my children experienced. I don't think either one of them have had a cavity to date! But, I grew up with a sweet tooth—lots of cavities ... and in the days where the dentist would use a 3/8" variable-speed Black and Decker drill to do the work! Some of you *know* what I mean! (There is a dentist's office over in Green Lake, Wisconsin, I'm told, that has a sign up in front of their office that says "Drilling and Blasting," if that helps explain my experience at the dentist in the past.) That, folks, constituted a very bad day in *my* book!

But, do you know what? My experience has taught me two things about those kind of 'bad days' ... and you can probably guess, by now, what those are...

1. There truly was a purpose to going to the dentist's office ... and the end result was—more times than not—a good thing. Knowing that my mouth and my teeth would be healthier because of my visit to the dentist really helped me to be able to get through the day...
2. I've never walked into a dentist's office yet, but what I was able to leave at the end of the appointment. I've never had to stay permanently at a dentist's office before! There was a designated *end* to this experience—a closing to the dreaded event...

Now, I know I'm talking about the dentist's office here, but please understand that I'm talking about a truth Jesus showed us that can be applied to *any* bad day we're having! When we walk with God—as Jesus did, *we can rest assured that there will be a purpose and an end to everything that we are going through* ... no matter how unpleasant! That's God's promise to us through Jesus' example. And, God is faithful ... to those who choose to walk with Him!

I've told some of my mom's story recently. But just to recap, it was roughly 18 years ago now (August 3, 1997), my mother passed away ... after a very short battle with brain cancer. She was gone—from the time they discovered her illness—in about 2 ½ months. One of the greatest struggles she had, after being informed of her illness and the serious nature of it, was the feeling that she wasn't done with her life's accomplishments. As a matter of fact, she began to question whether her life had been for any purpose at all...

My father, my two sisters, my two brothers, and other members of the family immediately began to share with my mother the truth of today's message. When you walk with God, *you can rest assured that your life will have a purpose and an end.* In

other words, her life was about something special ... and there would come an end to her 'bad day'—the suffering she'd been going through...

We began to let my mother know that she was a woman of God—one who followed God all of her life ... and we began to share with her many of her life's accomplishments—most tied into the lives of others...

- She'd loved and supported my father and had been a partner with him in ministry for over 40 years of her life! (And if you'd known my father that was no small accomplishment!)
- She'd given birth to and raised three sons who were—at the time—in full-time employment with the Church—two as pastors and one in camp & retreat ministry...
- She'd given birth to and raised two Godly daughters who were then busy raising their families in the Christian faith and helping to make sure there'd be Christian leaders in the future...
- She'd spent a life, in her own quiet way, touching the lives of countless parishioners and friends with the love of Christ; people could actually see Jesus in my mother—in her life (and told us that after her death)! What greater accomplishment could one have?

Mom finally came to the conclusion that with God ... there truly was a purpose to all that we're involved in here ... and an end to whatever 'bad day' we're going through. This was a truth of comfort to my mom ... and should be for every one of us as well...

Jesus' words were such a comfort to my mom that she could finally say with confidence, in the end, "It is finished!" She actually said "I'm happy!" but that was her way of saying the same thing. Look at the final words of *any* great person of God and I'd bet you would find the same—some version of "It is finished!" because that was Jesus' example to us! John Wesley's final words were, "Best of all is God is with us!" It was *his* way of saying, "It is finished!"

My prayer for all of us, today, is that this truth from Jesus on the cross would be imprinted on our brains—in our memories ... forever. My prayer is that any time we have a 'bad day,' we'll turn to these words of Jesus and remember ... *when we walk with God—as Jesus did, our lives will always have a purpose and an end ... no matter what we're experiencing at the moment.* Rest assured, folks ... there's always a purpose and an end ... with God...