

Saturday "Sermon"

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"Soul Storms"

After last week's tragic shootings, many of us are wondering how to understand the many kinds of pain, suffering, and tragedy that crash into our lives, sometimes changing their courses forever. One scripture to which Christians often turn is Romans 8:28-30: *"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And he gave them right standing with himself, and he promised them his glory."*

Let me highlight five truths in these verses: (1) Before you were ever born, God chose you to become like Jesus; (2) God does not cause everything that happens to you; (3) God can use events that God neither caused nor willed to bring about your transformation; (4) God intends for our lives to be joined together in a new race of persons, persons redeemed by the Cross and shaped by Christ; and (5), God's ultimate purpose is that we who follow Jesus should share in His glory in the Real Story for which this life is preparation.

While pain and suffering do crash into our lives, it helps to remember that the chief purpose of life is not to live a long time, nor is it to escape all suffering and pain. Our purpose is not to make a lot of money, to be famous, or to have kids who get scholarships to college. The purpose of our lives is to become like Jesus and to help His Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.

A week such as last week needs to be seen in Easter's light. Easter's message is that God suffers when we suffer—even last week's suffering was packed into Jesus' awful hours on the Cross—and God makes Jesus' Resurrection Power available to us so we can keep on keeping on when soul storms come into our lives. Because of the Empty Tomb, we know that although there may be storms on the surface of our lives, in the Deep Places, we are safe.

As Jesus told us, *"Anyone who listens to my teaching and obeys me is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse, because it is built on rock"* (Matthew 7:24-25).