

Finding God in the Tough Times

Hebrews 11:20

We must not fail to recognize the hand of God in the difficult times of life. "Shall a trumpet blow in a city and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6). "I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the LORD do all these things" (Isaiah 45:7). We mistake evil for good and good for evil. Those things that appear to the natural mind to be God's judgments are, in reality, God's blessings upon his own. "There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief" (Proverbs 12:21). This principle is illustrated by three people in our text.

I. You can be blessed with everything this world offers but find yourself bitter and without God.

This is illustrated by the life of Esau. Esau was the firstborn son of Isaac and Rebekah. He was a man's man—a hunter, skilled craftsman, and an all-around handsome guy. According to Hebrew tradition, the firstborn son received the family blessing, which included: Spiritual responsibility; double portion of the inheritance, and was the one through whom the covenant of God's grace continued. Esau sold his blessing to his brother Jacob. *Esau sold Christ for a moment's gratification* (Hebrews 12:15-17). Those temporal things that the world cherishes offer no permanent satisfaction (Luke 12:20-22).

II. You can experience every bad break in life yet be accepted by God and find contentment.

This is illustrated by the life of Jacob. It looked like, at least on the surface, that God hated Jacob. Jacob's life seems to have justified his cry, "*All these things are against me*" (Genesis 42:36). In reality, all the painful things he experienced were being orchestrated together for Jacob's everlasting good.

A. Jacob was hated by his own brother; his jealous twin brother Esau sought to kill him.

B. Jacob was embezzled by his uncle Laban; Laban made him work for seven years for the hand of his daughter Rachel, but Isaac gave him Leah instead of Rachel (Genesis 29:21-30).

C. Jacob had a dysfunctional family; twelve boys by two wives and two handmaids, and the boys themselves didn't get along well with one another (i.e. selling Joseph into slavery). Later on in his life, after all his struggles and troubles, and after losing everything, Jacob meets his brother. Jacob says, "I have enough" (Genesis 33:11). [I'm blessed! I've learned contentment!]

III. You can only experience God's full acceptance by faith in His Son whom He has given for sinners.

This is illustrated by Isaac (Genesis 27:26-29). The spiritual blessing that came upon his son Jacob was given *through* Esau. Jacob came before his father completely wrapped up in the life of Esau. A sacrifice was made – no blessing comes from God apart from the shed blood of the Lamb of God. The meat was brought to the father – so too, the sacrifice of the Son was *for* the sake of God. Jacob came before him in the robes of the son whom the father loved, as we are "clothed in Christ." Jacob came in the skins of the slain goat, so we must also come wrapped in the goodness of Christ. All the eternal blessings of God are yours in Christ. What is it that you are looking for in this life? "I know how to live in any condition ... for I have learned to be content in who I am (by the grace of God) for I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:11-13). Until Christ becomes your greatest treasure of all, your life really has nothing to treasure at all.