

40.3 Does God Care?

Greetings Patriots, This is PMG with GNA. Today is our “Woe Be Gone Wednesday,” where we discuss grief and recovery. Today we will consider the question, “Does God care?”

The loss of a loved one produces unimaginable pain. As a preacher, I thought I understood grief and its pain. After all, I have conducted many funeral services and counseled the grieving. I have read books on the stages of grief and observed as people went through them. I just thought I understood grief. That is until I went through it myself.

When we experience the death of a loved one, life turns upside down. Sorrow and depression can dominate our thoughts. Some turn to alcohol, drugs, food, exercise, busyness, friends, or other distractions for relief and short-term effects. But in the long run, they only add to our troubles. Where do we turn for the most significant help? Psalm 121 gives us the answer. Please read the whole Psalm. For now, let’s consider verses 1-4 (NKJV).

I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help?

²My help *comes* from the LORD,

Who made heaven and earth.

³He will not allow your foot to be moved;

He who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴Behold, He who keeps Israel

Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

I know that we can despair during our grief and feel utterly alone. God is present even if we cannot experience Him. In times of despair, we can know the promises of God more than the mirage of our feelings. His promises are true. We can trust Him.

We come to realize that God feels our loss with us. God understands our loss because He has experienced loss, too. The death of His son helps us know that He knows what the pain of loss is. Our heavenly Father wants to be our Helper in these times.

God will sometimes use providential or even supernatural means as our Helper in our grief to assist us. He cares for us even when we doubt. Let me tell you a story from WWII that illustrates His care.

Lieutenant James Whittaker wrote *We Thought We Heard The Angels Sing*. Lt. Whittaker was one of the seven men whose plane crashed into the Pacific Ocean on October 21, 1942. Their leader was the famous Captain Eddie Rickenbacker. Stranded on three rafts, these men had no water and only four oranges.

Tying their boats together, they drifted day after day without food or water, sometimes hysterical, tortured by the relentless sun, and constantly encircled by the dorsal fins of sharks. It seemed impossible for them to survive. But one of the men, Private Johnny Bartek, was a dedicated Christian who always carried a little New Testament with him to have his daily devotions. It was pocket-sized with a zipper arrangement that made it waterproof.

There, in the middle of the Pacific, Bartek had his devotions. His devotionals were not very private. The other six men wanted to know what he was doing. When he explained his daily Bible reading and prayer to them, they asked him why they couldn’t share in that.

And, so the men started having their daily devotions. They started at the beginning of the book, in the Gospel of Matthew. Soon they came to 6:31-34. It immediately became their hope, inspiration, and prayer: What shall we eat? What shall we drink? —Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

As the men read those verses day after day, a remarkable series of miracles started happening. Just when they were near starvation, for example, a bird landed on Rickenbacker's head, and they would grab it, carve it up for food, and use its innards for fishing bait. When they were near death by thirst, a cloud would drift over and fill their raft with water. Day after day, as they read these verses, prayed, and claimed these promises, God would somehow send food and water, sometimes even a fish jumping into their raft.

For twenty-one days, they drifted under the blazing sun in the middle of the Pacific. Through that experience, Lieutenant James Whittaker, the book's author, gave his life to Jesus Christ. "I don't think there was a man of us who didn't thank God for that little khaki-covered book," he said. "It led us to prayer, and prayer led us to safety."¹

The men in those rafts despaired their situation. They grieved at the thought of their deaths. God intervened and saved them from starvation and their distress. God cared about them, and He cares about us.

Notice how the apostle Paul sees God in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NKJV):

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,
⁴ who comforts us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

The word "tribulation" comes from the Greek word "*thlipsis*." *Thlipsis* is not a minor inconvenience. *Thlipsis* refers to pressure or a pressing together. This tribulation deals with internal pressure when we feel we have no escape.² Wouldn't you say that grief brings this kind of pressure?

God is present with us to relieve us of our *thlipsis*. He doesn't rush us in our grief but is present to help us move forward. One day all of our grief and suffering will end according to Revelation 21:4. Until that time we, "Trust in the Lord with all our heart, and lean not on our own understanding," as we paraphrase Proverbs 3:5 (NKJV). Solomon tells us the benefits of trusting the Lord in Proverbs 16:20 (NKJV):

He who heeds the word wisely will find good, And whoever trusts in the Lord, happy *is* he.

The most positive aspect of grief is that it leads us to God for comfort and strength. People can help, but God is the Healer. If you are grieving today, I hope you will let the Lord give you peace and comfort. He cares for us.

Keep The Light of God's Care Burning!

¹ McGraw, Guy. *Sermon Central.com*, 6 Aug. 2012, sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/81913/bible-influence-by-sermon-central.

² "Strong's G2347, thlipsis." *Blue Letter Bible*, www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2347/kjv/tr/0-1/.