

## Is God Really in Control of Your Life?

When we grumble and complain, worry and get anxious, or get angry at circumstances and blame God, what is the real root problem? Of what sin are we truly guilty? **It is the sin of unbelief**, and specifically that **we don't believe God is really in CONTROL of our life at that moment**. Maybe you're angry at God and shaking your fist at Him because of something happening in a loved one's life, and you feel God has let you down there, and is not taking care of your loved one. You think, somehow, He's fallen down on the job. He just isn't taking care of us, or of our loved ones, in the way we think He ought to. Don't you know that even if it were possible for Jesus to fall asleep in the middle of your crisis, He would still be in control? As long as you have "Jesus in the boat with you" you are not going to go down! If you have received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and been born into His family, He will never leave you, and He is "in the boat with you" so to speak, through all the storms of your life.

- **Luke 8:22-25** "Now it happened, on a certain day, that he got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, 'Let us go over to the other side of the lake.' And they launched out. But as they sailed **He fell asleep**. and a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to Him and awoke Him saying, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. and they ceased, and there was a calm. But **He said to them, 'Where is your faith?'** And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, 'Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!'"

Jesus and His disciples got into a ship on the Sea of Galilee, and **Jesus said**, "Let us go over to the other side." He didn't say, "Let us go out into the middle of the lake and drown in the storm." When the storm came up, and **Jesus was asleep in the boat**, the disciples went into panic mode and totally forgot that Jesus had said to go to the other side. When the storms of life come upon us, we also tend to forget **what God HAS SAID in His word**, and we too go into panic mode and high anxiety. Jesus said if we would "hear His words and DO them" we would make it through the storms of life. Jesus' disciples had heard His word, "Let us go over to the other side," but they didn't DO His word or fully believe it (put His words into practice). When they finally woke Jesus up, they were in such a panic that they said, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith. If nothing else, **they should have known that with Jesus in the boat, nothing bad could happen to them**. Jesus would never have rebuked them for their lack of faith if it had not been possible for them to get through the situation successfully. Just as Jesus said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you," His grace and power are sufficient (enough) for any problem that comes our way. Paul said he would "glory in his infirmities and weaknesses", so we can also say, "Lord, I thank You that I'm too weak to handle this situation on my own, but Your grace is sufficient and enough, and I'm trusting You to work this out for me."

- **II Corinthians 12:9-10** "And He said to me, '**My grace is sufficient for you; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.**' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast (glory) in my infirmities, that the **power of Christ** may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."
- **Matthew 7:24-27** "Therefore **whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them**, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

I heard something the other day that might be helpful to remember: "It's not the circumstances of life that cause the problems, but **our REACTION to the circumstances.**" In other words, as Paul and Silas were locked up in the stocks, having been falsely arrested and severely beaten, they had several choices: to whine, complain, have a "pity party" or be angry and blame God, or praise God and trust Him for the outcome. Which one did they choose? You probably remember, but just in case, it's in Acts 16:22-35, and they chose to praise God in spite of their circumstances. It resulted in their miraculous escape, and resulted in the jailer, his family, and many others being saved and coming into the kingdom of God. You might be surprised to see how easy it is to fall into the complaining mode, though. It can happen to any of us if we are not "sober and vigilant" and being aware of Satan's trap (I Peter 5:8). It's so easy to become like Esau, who sold his birthright for a bowl of stew, because he was so hungry at the time, and did not look ahead to realize what he would be losing. **We get our eyes off of the big picture of what God is doing**, and only see the momentary discomfort or inconvenience to us or our loved ones. God has something in mind, and we need to trust Him to work it out, and be willing to suffer a little inconvenience for Jesus' sake.

- **Romans 8:28** "And we know that **ALL things WORK together for GOOD** to those who LOVE GOD, to those who are the CALLED according to His purpose."

Look at the difference in Peter by Acts 12:1-11. James, John's brother and nicknamed one of the "Sons of Thunder", had been put to death (probably beheaded) by King Herod. Stephen had been killed by stoning some time before that, and now Peter had been arrested, and was chained up in prison, waiting to be executed. **He has such FAITH in God, that he is actually sound asleep**, chained to the guards. Jesus was sound asleep in the boat, back when the disciples were in a panic over the storm out on the lake, because He trusted His Heavenly Father, and now Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, is able to sleep because he has that same kind of faith in God. Paul and Silas (Acts 16:19-34) had a similar experience. Are these only "nice Bible stories" for us to read and wonder about, or are we to have the same kind of faith? In John 16:33, Jesus said that **we WILL have tribulation in this world**, but Jesus also said that **you CAN have PEACE** in the midst of the tribulation (difficult situations) simply because you TRUST in Him. When He says "I have overcome the world," part of the meaning in the original Greek is **"I have deprived it of power to harm you."** The storm may be raging all around you, but you are SAFE in Jesus. He has deprived that situation of whatever harm it might have done you, and He promises that He will work ALL things together for your GOOD (Romans 8:28). However, you will not **experience His PEACE** until you BELIEVE it, and start thanking Him for EVERYTHING and PRAISING Him in all situations. You CAN'T AFFORD to lean and rely on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6). God is much smarter and far more powerful than you are, and **He is in control of your life! Start acting like it!** Then and only then will you have real peace and victory in your life, and then God will be able to start making whatever changes need to be made. Until you trust Him completely, **you BLOCK His power from working in your life by your UNBELIEF**(Matthew 13:58).

- **John 16:33** "These things I have spoken to you, that IN ME you may have PEACE. In the world you will have tribulation; but **be of good cheer, I have OVERCOME the world.**"
- **I John 5:4-5** "For whatever is born of God **OVERCOMES the world.** And this is the victory that has **OVERCOME the world - our FAITH.** Who is he who **OVERCOMES the world**, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"
- **Matthew 13:58** "And He did not do many mighty works there because of their **UNBELIEF.**"

God wants you to be an "overcomer" rather than to BE overcome by the circumstances and storms of life. The great examples of faith in the Bible are meant to help us have that same kind of faith in the same God (Romans 10:17). Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego saw the fiery furnace "deprived of power to harm them" when they came out without even a hair singed or the smell of smoke about them. The flames had been heated seven times hotter

than normal, but **God deprived it of power to harm them!** Daniel saw the hungry lions "deprived of their power to harm him", although they quickly ate up all his enemies (Daniel 6:16-24). **Don't you think God can remove the "harm" from those situations and circumstances that come up in YOUR LIFE that you are so afraid of?** He only asks that we trust Him to do it, and one way to show Him and ourselves that we are trusting God is to rejoice, praise Him and give Him thanks in all circumstances.

- **Daniel 3:17 & 27** "...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and HE WILL DELIVER US..." "...these men, upon whose bodies THE FIRE HAD NO POWER, nor was an hair of their head singed..."
- **I Thessalonians 5:16-18** "**Rejoice ALWAYS**, pray without ceasing, **in everything GIVE THANKS** for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

God does not expect us to just grin and sing, "Dooon't Worry - Beeeee Happy" all day long in spite of our difficult circumstances. When the word of God tells us to **rejoice and give thanks in ALL circumstances**, it is not some form of empty "positive thinking" like the world tries to do. When Jesus said to "be of good cheer" it does mean to REJOICE, but **the JOY comes from KNOWING that He is in control and will work it all out for our good.**

What are the practical steps to having peace in the midst of trials and tribulation? God promises you His peace in His word, but EXPERIENCING His peace is not automatic. You have to **LET it rule in your heart**, and **NOT allow your heart to be troubled**. The only way you can do that is to **TAKE your thoughts captive** whenever negative thoughts come into your mind, **REPLACE those negative thoughts** with the WORD of GOD, and **be THANKFUL and PRAISE the Lord** for EVERY situation and circumstance in your life, no matter how unreasonable that may seem. Take all of your questioning, all your doubts and complaining, and cast it onto Jesus, because He cares for you (I Peter 5:7). **Cast your burden of doubt, fear, worry and anxiety onto the Lord**, and He will sustain you (keep you going).

- **Isaiah 26:3** "You will keep him in perfect PEACE, whose mind is stayed (focused) on You."
- **John 14:27** "Peace I leave with you. My PEACE I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not LET your heart be troubled, neither LET it be afraid."
- **Philippians 4:6-8** "**Be anxious for nothing**, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and **the PEACE of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
- **Colossians 3:15** "And LET the PEACE of CHRIST rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be THANKFUL."
- **Jeremiah 29:11** "'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare (your good) and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope.'"
- **II Timothy 1:7** "For God has NOT given us a spirit of FEAR, but of POWER and of LOVE and of a sound MIND."
- **Psalms 61:1-4** "Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You. **When my HEART is OVERWHELMED**, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. For You have been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will TRUST in the shadow of Your wings."
- **Psalms 55:22** "Cast your BURDEN on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved."