

TAKING LIFE AS IT COMES

Romans 8:18-28

By Raymond White

Christ blesses and protects his own. But that doesn't mean that life for the believer is pain free, which is a shock for some Christians who think that the Christian life should be pain free. Then when problems come along, they are disappointed and bail out because their bed-of-roses Christianity failed to live up to its promises.

Matthew 13:21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

How do we get deep roots? With deep plowing, right down to tough truths: first to your sins, then to Christ's death and the forgiveness it brings, then to the truth that the world will hate you for his name's sake (*John 15:19-21*), and finally to the truth that even without persecution life can be just plain tough. But the good news is —

Romans 8:18 The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

That is the point. We are *not* delivered from worldly sufferings, but they are incidental by comparison. And in a strange sort of way, inexplicable to us, even the bad things are blessings in a backhanded sort of way.

Romans 8:28 All things work together for good of them that love God.

In the movie "Lawrence of Arabia" (starring Peter O'Toole), Lawrence demonstrates to a friend a strange sort of talent. Showing off, he puts his finger in a match flame and holds it there until the match flame burns out. He does this without flinching and without any visible sign of pain or discomfort. When he friend attempts to replicate the same "trick," he screams "ouch" and reflexively pulls his finger from the flame and shakes his hand to mitigate the pain. The friend asks the obvious question: "What the secret?" Lawrence answers, "The secret is not minding the pain!" The secret is there is no secret. If you put your finger in a flame, it will burn and it will hurt. The question is, what do you do with that pain? That's all.

When you embrace Christ, he may deliver you from certain problems or you may not. But whatever problems life drags you through, will you endure the pain and cling to Christ?

Here's a poem I like that says it well —

God has not promised skies always blue,
Flowers struned pathways all our lives through.
God has not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.
But God has promised strength for the day,
Rest for the labor, light for the way.
Grace for each trial, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.