



Picking Sides

From time to time we hear folks talk about the struggles and bad times they have endured and the trials that they have overcome. Many of these people give thanks to God for getting them through the rough times. It is interesting to look at some of the predicaments that they are referring to in this regard. Sometimes the reference may be something that might not be according to God's will, such as an unscriptural divorce, for example. It is comforting to know when a bad situation has come to an end. It is very comforting to place our confidence in God to get us through the negative things that we face. David writes, "***The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?***" (Psm 118.6). To think that God is an ally that is ready to help us through our struggles is a concept that does have scriptural merit but in the mainstream of religious thought has taken on a meaning that the scriptures do not convey. First of all, when this statement appears in the scriptures and we find an exhortation to rely on God and his providence, we find that these provisions are for those who are his children. The question then becomes; who are God's children? We know that God has established relationships with those who would be faithful to him and follow his commandments. Throughout the Bible we find that those who are faithful to God had the privilege of calling on the Lord during times of trouble and received strength and sometimes deliverance from the trials that they faced. The next thing to consider are the types of situations that God has assisted his children with. These generally occur within the context of being challenged by others who opposed the Lord or to confirm that the word that was being spoken was from God. Two notable examples of these are the plagues that were brought on the Egyptians during the time of Moses and the work of the apostles and others during the first century as they taught the gospel for the first time in various areas. Their deliverance from trial and reliance on God's providence was in relation to preserving and protecting the work of the Lord, not the typical problems of everyday life. Another point to

consider is that the working and help of the Lord manifests itself and works according to the will of the Lord. Daniel for instance was still thrown in the Lions den but God intervened by shutting the animals mouths. (**Dan 6**). All of this was done to provide proof that the Lord was God and there were no others. The faithful did not see God as a being who was at their beck and call but realized that they were the servants of the Lord and therefore subject to the will of God. Today there are too many people who are marginally religious who have not submitted themselves to the commands of God in true obedience who sometimes see God as working for them and therefore subject to being called upon for help in every problem. The deliverance, aid and providence of God is misunderstood by many people. God has not promised that he will assist us in every trivial thing that we perceive as a trial. We may not receive the help and deliverance we think we will and there are times when deliverance may be in the strength and courage to pass through death. This was the case with Christ. Jesus came into the world to die for the sins of mankind. As he prayed in the garden he submitted to the will of his Father who was in Heaven. God had sent him and strengthened him to face the ordeal. Matthew tells us that Christ in garden "***...fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.***" (Matt 26.39). Are there blessings from God to all? Christ indicates that God cares for all creation when he stated, "***...for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.***" (Matt 5.45). Solomon likewise prayed during the dedication of the temple that God would hear the prayers of foreigners so that they would know that he was God (**1 Kings 8.41-43**). This does not entitle one to take for granted that they can call on God with the same confidence that a Christian can. We need to insure that we are doing the will of God. Then we can count on the help and assistance needed to reach the home that has been promised but how God decides to help will be up to him and will be what is best for us in the long run. We need to make sure we are on the Lord's side so we can have that confidence that he hears our prayers.

TLC