

Christianity Clarified Volume 23

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[0 : 00] What is Christianity really all about?

The issue remains very confusing to a large segment of our society. At times, it even extends to many who consider themselves Christian. Here, in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion, is Marv Wiseman, with another session of Christianity Clarified.

Perspective Changes Everything One's perspective of everything is another key element necessary to grasp in order to address the whys of our pain.

It, along with comprehending our fallen world, including our own personal fallenness, will go a long way toward understanding our present pains and can even give us peace and contentment in the midst of them.

Our personal perspective is severely limited, We often do not understand events from the past, misinterpret events occurring in the present, and surely are clueless about the future.

[1 : 07] All because of that limited human perspective. But God has no such limitation. With Him, the future and the past are as clear as the present. And having that full perspective, God is able to intervene or not intervene in the affairs of man as His wisdom deems best.

God has purposes and goals that completely escape us mere mortals with our tiny limited perspective. The scriptures consistently remind us that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and everywhere present.

Nothing is hid from Him with whom we have to do. We humans have great difficulty trying to coordinate God's sovereignty with the responsibility of man. Yet God is able to sort it all out because He has the perspective that His very being, character, and nature give Him.

Intellectually and theologically, we know this to be true of God. Our problem is in remembering it when we are experiencing great adversity, perhaps physical or emotional pain we can't even describe.

Being unable to see beyond our losses or pain, we tend to derive little comfort from knowing that God knows our situation full well. We don't want God to merely know it.

[2 : 23] We want Him to do something about it, preferably remove it, and soon. And we all tend to be like this. It's an integral part of our humanity and its several limitations, particularly that of a deficient perspective.

God has a complete perspective and knows full well our part in it. Our losses and our pains, while often seeming senseless to us, will one day be seen to fit the entire mix in a way now unimaginable.

Hindered by our limited perspective, we tend to chafe and grumble over the painful losses, feelings, and circumstances that come into our life.

Sometimes our sorrows are self-induced, and sometimes they result from the actions of others that hurt us deeply. But in any case, God is aware of it all, even though we may feel He isn't.

And in the midst of it all, we honor Him best if we are willing to rest and trust in Him, while right in the very midst of our pain. No one is saying this is easy to do.

[3 : 33] It isn't. And this is the very reason most refuse to do it. Despite its difficulty, it is still the only way we honor God in the midst of our pain.

Is our why answered? Often, no. And we leave it to Him to answer in His good time. It may not be until we see Him.

Is that okay with you? Perspective Changes Everything, Part 2 What are the choices we have when confronted with a pain that won't subside?

And let's be clear, right or wrong, this brief list contains choices open to us. And it's likely we will opt for one choice today and another tomorrow.

This, too, is merely reflective of our humanness. Most of us who have experienced prolonged pain of any kind know what it means to hold a pity party, where we mope around feeling sorry for ourself.

[4 : 42] Yet, another choice popular among humans when God won't do what we want, especially in regard to our pain, is rejection and defiance. And it goes something like this.

Okay, God, if that's the way you're going to be and turn a deaf ear to my pain and my prayers, I'm just not going to pray anymore. And I'm not going to your old church either.

And you can forget about my reading your so-called good book. Take a hike, God, if you're even there. You've turned a deaf ear to me and my needs after I've tried to serve you, but no more.

Well, that's the option of defiance. We're going to make God regret His not being more attentive and responsive to us. Of course, this is all supreme human arrogance, but persistent pain can produce this attitude.

Then there is the option of resignation to the pain. Whether physical or mental, as in emotional pain, we become persuaded it is here to stay, so we may as well resign ourselves to it.

[5 : 49] But be assured, we certainly would change it if we could. But since we can't, we just resolve to live with it. But there's at least one more option that comes to mind, and it is the toughest and the least attractive.

But biblically speaking, it's the best of all. And here it is. We affirm the pain. That's right. We affirm the presence of pain as being the most needful thing for us from God's perspective.

Can we believe that God really does know the way that we take? Can we believe He is fully aware of our situation and chooses for our benefit to allow the pain?

No. We are not into sadism, nor are we gluttons for punishment. And yes, we have pursued all reasonable medical possibilities and are open to others.

As in the case of the Apostle Paul, who earnestly besought the Lord three times to remove a thorn in his flesh, only to hear the Lord say he would not remove it, but he would with it give Paul the all-sufficient grace to bear up under it.

[7 : 01] It clearly suggests that Paul, now having God's perspective, rather than his own limited perspective, was able to affirm the thorn in the flesh as truly being in his own best interest.

It was so because God said it was. Paul came to agree with God and affirm it. This is the ultimate response to our pain.

It is a road less traveled, but by far and away the best there is, and it comes complete with a peace that passes understanding. Self-Induced Emotional Pain The emotional pain that heads the list for most of us who suffer with it is that resulting from our own actions.

We are all capable of negative behavior and bad decisions that have ongoing painful consequences. None of us is immune from this all-too-human reality.

It may be something we have mentally replayed time and again, and each time a new surge of pain mingled with regret is experienced.

[8 : 21] We've tried ignoring it, but that doesn't work. And if our pain involves guilt for having done wrong to ourselves or others, the only adequate way of handling it is via repentance.

If it is ourselves we have harmed via abuse of some kind, such as drugs, alcohol, sexual activity, or some other type of addiction, there is no real or lasting release from its accompanying pain apart from the cleansing reality of forgiveness.

God stands at the ready, as promised in 1 John 1.9, that if we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He will because He said He would. But it is also contingent upon our confession, that is, our admission and agreement with God that that particular sin or sins produced the guilt and pain we are experiencing.

Then, because God has forgiven us, we need to forgive ourselves. Now, don't confuse self-forgiveness with justifying our sin. It is not justified.

[9 : 40] In forgiving ourself, we are merely admitting to being a fallen member of the human race as everyone else. And as such, we acknowledge having done something we know we shouldn't have.

And in forgiving ourself, we must be reminded that we can and should do so, because God, who is absolutely holy, has forgiven us, and our standards certainly do not exceed His.

As for not feeling forgiven, we must be reminded that our forgiveness is not real because we feel it is, but because God says it is.

And when we believe what God says and accept that as true, our feelings will eventually have to come along. When that happens, we then are released from the guilt we have been suffering and the pain that guilt produces.

This is the only prescribed remedy God has provided for those who are already in Christ and are seeking forgiveness and relief from the pain caused by our sin.

[10 : 45] The reference again is 1 John 1.9. If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But please be advised, this directive is for those already in Christ.

For those who are not in Christ and what that means for them will be considered upcoming. Please join us for this next segment that could mean all the difference for your present and your future.

The Fountain of Forgiveness On our previous segment of Christianity Clarified, we briefly discussed the need for one suffering from self-induced emotional pain to seek forgiveness.

This was also with the assumption that you are one who already possesses a personal relationship with Christ as your Savior. But even in this blessed position of being a child of God, sinful behavior that produces the guilt and pain we experience needs to be confessed as sin.

We referenced 1 John 1.9 that states, If we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[12 : 06] But as stipulated earlier, this option is limited to those who have already received God's salvation as a gift of His grace. If you have not already done that, then this is where you must begin.

Your true need is not merely God's forgiveness for some specific sin that produces your present pain, but for God's forgiveness through which He extends His salvation and eternal life to you.

This does not deal with any specific sin of yours, but rather deals with all your sin. And yes, it includes that particular sin over which you may be so greatly exercised.

The forgiveness for our sin that accompanies salvation is that which God applies to the whole of our being. His forgiveness is judicial, legal, positional.

It gives us not only God's forgiveness, but God's placing us in His favor, whereby He accepts us in His beloved Son. We now have a new status, a new birth, a new freedom, a new destiny, a whole new everything.

[13 : 15] As the Scripture says, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. That's 2 Corinthians 5.17.

It doesn't cover merely some specific sin that may be troubling you and causing you significant emotional pain, but it includes all your sin, past, present, and future.

This is because Jesus Christ is the very fountain of forgiveness for all who come to Him with confession and repentance. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, which He shed in His finished work on the cross, that is applied to your case and the case of all who trust in Him.

The hymn writer William Cowper said it so well when he penned those words, There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.

Yes, dear friend, that would include the stain of the sin that may be producing such mental and emotional agony in your own life. Christ, in His sacrificial death, became that fountain for us all.

[14 : 31] Complete cleansing awaits all who will with their will are prepared to take that plunge. This gracious, full, free cleansing and forgiveness awaits all who put their case in the hands of this loving Savior.

Does that include you? Our Sin and Our Sins One of the greatest areas of Christianity that stands in need of clarification is the distinction between our sin and our sins.

Singular versus the plural. A brief and simple explanation is found in the age-old statement that is as profound as it is simple. And here it is. And if you understand this, you are well on your way toward understanding a lot of things that are true only in Christianity.

And here is the saying, We are not sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are sinners. Did you get that? It's critically important that you do.

We are not sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are sinners. The first hurdle for many folks to get over is simply the fact they are a sinner.

[15 : 50] And many refuse to put themselves in that category because they regard themselves better than that. Often their protest and reply is, Well, I'm not saying I'm perfect, but I certainly am not a sinner.

Well, your position is well understood and is probably the opinion of most. No doubt you are morally and ethically well above a lot of your fellow human beings.

And if God graded on the curve, you would be okay, definitely in the upper percentile. But why do you think God grades on the curve? This could be the most fatal assumption anyone could make.

Please don't make the mistake of humanizing God and relegating Him to our kind of human relativism. We tend to see ourselves and fellow humans as below average, average, and above average, a kind of sliding scale that allows us to improve or worsen our status dependent on our behavior.

But God engages in no such system. God is not a moral relativist. He is an absolutist as regards the issue of human sin. With God, we are up or down, in or out, forgiven or unforgiven, saved or lost, Christian or non-Christian, believer or unbeliever, and nobody is somewhere in between.

[17 : 14] There is no fuzzy middle. We are in Christ or outside of Christ. Nobody is almost in or almost out. The point of salvation and God's forgiveness is a crisis act of believing, not a gradual process of behaving.

Christ died for our sin. That includes our sins. The singular sin refers to our fallen nature and character.

The plural sins refer to the actions and attitudes that issue from our singular nature of sin. God's forgiveness for our sin involves the application of His forgiveness to the whole of our nature and character.

It is a blanket-like forgiveness that establishes our connection to God with eternal life. It is a once-for-all forgiveness never to be repeated.

Yet, with this blanket of forgiveness, we remain capable of committing sins that do not involve our salvation, but very much involve our fellowship or being on good terms with our forgiving God.

[18 : 25] More upcoming. New Sins Require New Forgiveness A most remarkable event is recorded in John's Gospel, the 13th chapter.

Jesus, clearly Master of all, and even acknowledged as such by His twelve apostles, reduces Himself to the role of a menial servant. He takes a basin of water, water, and with a towel begins to wash the apostles' feet.

This appears as a bizarre thing to do. Of course, it is very foreign to us in our Western culture, but it was commonplace in the culture of the ancient Mideast. The washing of one's feet was deemed an act of necessary hospitality, which any decent host would provide for his guests, although usually the host would assign that task to one of the household servants, but not Jesus.

Though fulfilling the role of the host here at the Last Supper, our Lord Himself takes the towel and the basin to personally perform this servile task. After all, was it not written of Him that He who was Lord of all did not come to be served, but to serve?

But to the apostles, this demeaning act appeared completely out of character for their Lord to be performing, especially on those such as themselves. Frankly, they appeared quite embarrassed by it all, so much so that Peter expressed his unwillingness by saying, in effect, I could never allow you to wash my feet.

[20 : 09] Jesus responded with, Peter, if I wash not your feet, you have no part in me. Peter, rapidly reconsidering, came back with, well, if that's the case, then wash all of me.

It was obvious Peter wanted to be every bit into and with Christ in everything. When Jesus then replied that one who has been fully bathed already need not be bathed again, yet, by reason of walking about the dusty paths of Jerusalem in sandals, the feet, exposed to the dirt and grime, are often in need of cleansing.

Clearly, Jesus is not really talking about personal hygiene. He's speaking of the moral and spiritual cleansing accomplished in spiritual regeneration.

This is when one is cleansed in his entirety through the miracle of the new birth. This results in a full, free forgiveness of our sin and is the spiritual counterpart the physical body.

As one who has had a complete bath does not need to bathe again in entirety, but only needs to cleanse his feet that are exposed to the elements, so too, one who has received God's cleansing and pardon and salvation needs not to be saved all over again.

[21 : 33] Yet, even as a cleansed and forgiven believer, we certainly are not immune to committing sinful deeds for which we need cleansing and forgiveness.

This ongoing confession and forgiveness enables our fellowship with God to be maintained on good terms. Otherwise, our sin, while unconfessed, constitutes an estrangement from God.

Restoration and continuation of sweet fellowship with God is essential to our spiritual growth. remembering the origin of our loss.

It's time to recall that poignant quote we referred to earlier on Christianity Clarified. It's attributed to C.S. Lewis. Do you recall it? Here's a refresher.

God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

[22 : 41] To that concept, we have added the idea that most of our pain is a consequence of some kind of loss. In this world of fallenness, there are so many things we may lose, and scarcely none of us can say we have not tasted the bitterness that comes with losing something.

It may be a lost love, lost mate, lost child, lost health, lost wealth, lost position, lost reputation, lost freedom as in experiencing incarceration.

We can even suffer a losing of face, a painful embarrassment and humiliation we may feel we can never regain. Can you think of other losses you have experienced, and the pain you have had to live with daily because of it?

You probably can if you are as human as the rest of us. And let's be reminded that all losses we experience stem from the original losses our first parents sustained in that Garden of Eden.

They were many, and they were great. Think of them with me. They lost their innocence, their status and fellowship with their Maker, their dominion over all the world that God had entrusted to them, their carefree kind of life, from merely tending and keeping the garden, to the new rigor of contending with the thorns and thistles that would oppose them in their tilling of the ground.

[24 : 11] Couple that with the new experience of the sweat of their brow in that labor to produce their food. All of these and more were significant losses, and, oh yes, let's not forget the lost harmony earlier enjoyed by Adam and Eve.

It had now deteriorated into a new struggle between the sexes, because now each seeks to dominate the other, in a way foreign to the togetherness enjoyed before their fall.

And in the midst of all those losses, none was so great as their loss of life itself, or lives, we should say, because Adam and Eve both died spiritually when they partook of the tree, and then years later, they succumbed to physical death.

Their original nature, their relationship to God, and their relationship toward each other as husband and wife, were all a part of what God had earlier pronounced as very good.

It was the kind of very good that did not contain losses. That all changed, and changed dramatically, so much so that you and I experience our painful share of losses as well.

[25 : 33] And now, the issue of losses is a given. The only thing that is different is in our dealing with the losses we all experience. A Chronology of Human Pain Without exception, everyone listening to this segment of Christianity Clarified is at some phase in the chronology of life.

You may be a relatively young person, perhaps in your twenties, or still a teenager. Others we can call more mature in their later years, some older still, around your fourth or sixth decade of life.

And then some are where yours truly is positioned, having joined the ranks of the octogenarians. So everybody is somewhere in the chronology of this experience we call life.

And in connection with our chronology, some pains we experience tend to be more common for people at certain stages of their life than at others. So what we plan to explore, though briefly, has to do with the kinds of physical or emotional pain experienced by most of us at certain junctures in our personal chronology.

We will just meander through the chronology of a typical life from youth through old age and allow you to identify yourself in one or more of the stops we make along the way.

[27 : 06] We all have a lot of pains in common, and we all need to be rid of them to the extent it's possible, because life is too short with too much enjoyment to be had to allow ourselves to be burdened down unnecessarily with the excess baggage of pain, especially if it's pain of the emotional variety.

Some physical pains we may take with us to our grave, but we need not do that with emotional pain. Physical pain is a consequence of our body.

Parts and joints of these frames weaken and deteriorate over time, often resulting in an ongoing physical pain. Sometimes we can trade in our original parts for metal replacements like knees and hips and others.

But the other pain, our emotional pains, are more the realm of our non-physical spirit. And with our volition, we have the capability to address our non-physical spirit in a way that we cannot address our physical body.

This appears to be what the Apostle Paul is addressing in 2 Corinthians 4 when he says, Though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

[28 : 34] And while it's true, we can also renew the outward man, that is, our physical body with a little food and rest, but only to a point, because age and debilitation will still take its toll, but not so with our inward man, the human spirit.

It is dependent only upon the spiritual food and rest provided for it, and here is where our emotional pain dwells.

We can counter it in a way we cannot counter the body. And here is where we plan to go in many of our upcoming segments, and the next will deal with the emotional pain of a youthful lost love.

The pain from a lost love. Call it a youthful first love, or one's true love eventually lost.

It's a loss that may provide a lingering emotional pain throughout one's entire lifetime. And the world over contains loves like this that were wanted, desperately wanted, only to have never been realized.

[29 : 48] The pain from these deep, unfulfilled longings is the stuff of novels and movies. The lost love of Wayne and Dorothy is a case in point.

Wayne was twenty. Dorothy was eighteen. They were so taken with each other, such as are so many when dating, they couldn't or wouldn't wait until everything was done decently and in order.

You get my drift, don't you? So with the typical hormone surging in both of them, they crossed that culturally, morally forbidden boundary, the one that tempts every dating couple.

They justified it with the complete confidence that they were going to get married later anyway. And since they knew they deeply loved each other, why should they deny themselves of this perfectly normal biological urge of physically giving themselves to each other in that supreme act of devoted love?

And they didn't. And now, Dorothy is pregnant. But still, the solution was simple. Just go ahead and get married now, quickly.

[30 : 57] They were going to later anyway. Just move up the date. But because it was 1935, and because they truly did love each other, abortion was never even thought of as an option.

And this was the day when pregnancy outside of marriage was a shame for the couple and their families. It was far from a badge of honor or rite of passage as many see it today.

But then, neither Wayne nor Dorothy was of legal age to obtain a marriage license, because neither was 21, and that was the legal age then. Others saw a solution to that kind of problem by merely going to an adjacent state where it was possible to marry at 18.

Problem solved. But not quite. Dorothy's greatly angered father threatened to shoot Wayne on sight when he saw him, and he had the kind of reputation that made that no idle threat.

So rather than scoop up Dorothy and run off to the next state to get married and give his new father-in-law time to cool down before appearing again, Wayne left the state on his own, heading for the deep south, leaving Dorothy with that pregnancy and all that entailed in the year of 1935.

[32 : 19] Within months, Wayne met another girl and married her. And Dorothy then may not have been all that much of a lost love for Wayne, but there was no question that Wayne was very much a lost love for Dorothy.

And even though she eventually married a wonderful guy who took great fatherly care of Dorothy's infant son, yet she still carried that proverbial torch for Wayne throughout her entire life.

And I know this because Dorothy and Wayne were my mom and dad. Countering Pain from a Lost Love, Part 1 Rather than pining over a lost love of many years ago, as depicted in the previous segment, was there a remedy available that would have allowed Dorothy to remember her lost love without the pain it accompanied?

Yes, there was, but I'm sure she never knew of it. And that was because she, like so many of us, maybe even most of us, never really get beyond our feelings.

And these feelings tend to dictate to us in an even more powerful way than our thinking. While the biblical model of Christianity is to utilize our thinking to produce our feelings, it's often reversed, so we allow our feelings and emotions to control our thinking.

[33 : 50] This is a major source of our emotional pain. After all, we do know what we feel, don't we? Oftentimes, we may not even know what we think or what to think, but we do know what we feel.

And here, feeling is the source of the pain. It has often been said and bears repeating that Christianity is a thinking faith.

And no, we're not talking about stumping for a cold intellectualism. Because feelings and emotions are wonderful God-given realities, and we can't imagine a satisfying life without a generous portion of them.

They truly are an integral part of our humanity. But feelings can be fickle and fleeting. So we are not to determine our state of being based upon how we feel, but upon what we know.

And knowing is realized only via thinking, not feeling. The feeling is then to be a result of what we know. We are to feel what we feel because we know what we know.

[34 : 54] So, what do we know? Well, we know that God works all things together for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. Really? How can we know that?

Because He who cannot lie said that. And He didn't ask us whether we feel that, but whether we believe that. In believing it, we use our mind to do so.

Now, granted, it might be confusing because the Bible often speaks of believing something in our heart, and we tend to equate that exclusively with our emotions, not our minds. But biblical belief in the heart includes both as the totality of our being.

It is the core of our personhood. It is intellectual belief that results in a full thinking leading to action or commitment.

Commitment entails emotion or action. The feeling authenticates the thinking by acting upon the decision reached by thinking.

[36 : 02] I think. I believe. And that leads me to do something about it. Therefore, I commit. Dorothy, my mother, understood little or nothing of this, and neither do most people today, including Christians.

It's a major cause of so much emotional pain. More upcoming. Please get this. It's a life changer and a pain eraser.

Countering the Pain of a Lost Love, Part 2 If there is any one verse of Scripture, all believers should commit to memory, this is it. It is a true panacea for any loss, pain, or adversity that may enter a believer's life.

In fact, many have already committed this verse to memory. It will be there in your spiritual memory bank when you need it. And you will need it. Because our fallenness dictates that we are all destined for adversity of one kind or another.

It is simply part of the human condition, rich or poor, ignorant or educated, hale and hardy, or weak and feeble. Various adversities, constituting losses of all kinds that produce pain both physical and emotional.

[37 : 29] And we are all alike in experiencing these adversities, but we are certainly not all alike in the way we counter the pain they produce. The difference is between those who, in simple trust and faith, believe the verse of which I speak and those who don't.

And yes, I'm speaking of Christians who don't. The verse? Well, you've probably guessed it by now. It's Romans 8.28, and God works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Does it really say that? Yes, it does. But does it really mean that? Yes, it does. But, and this is a but only you can answer, but do you really believe that?

Because if you do, then that becomes your perspective, and perspective changes everything. Remember? Perspective is your way of seeing things. A biblical perspective enables you to see things from God's viewpoint.

God says He is in charge of every believer's life, and He will do whatever is required to make certain that everything entering your life will work out for your ultimate good. It won't just automatically happen that way, but God will work it out that way.

[38 : 47] That's His promise to all who are in Christ, and all He asks us to do is trust Him to that end. And by the way, all things will work together for our good even if we don't believe that.

It's just that when we see how they did, and it may be an eternity, we will likely be embarrassed and apologetic that we didn't really believe it when we could have and should have.

Would this apply even to a love that was lost? Absolutely. And it applies to every other pain caused by any and every other kind of loss.

Our refusal to believe this does not and will not negate its reality, but it does prevent us from having the peace that passes all understanding.

Our pain from the loss is real, but it is wonderfully tempered by knowing that God is really at work and will ultimately make even adversity turn out for our good, perhaps not our immediate good, but ultimately for our eventual good.

[40 : 07] That's the perspective we must keep in mind. Pain from the Loss of a Mate, Part 1 Losing a mate, supposedly one's life's partner, can also be categorized as voluntarily or involuntarily.

And there was a time in our nation's history when most mates were lost involuntarily. And by that we simply mean the mate whom they lost did not leave them voluntarily, but involuntarily.

That is, they were taken from them in death via an illness or accidental death that claimed them. Their death is very often followed with a series of questions on the part of the surviving mate.

Chiefest among those questions is usually something like, what could I have done differently that might have made a difference so they would not have died? Or, there may even be some sense of guilt that our mate was taken rather than us, usually called survivor's guilt.

And this rarely is a justified feeling of guilt, but some feel it nonetheless. All kinds of emotions may visit the survivor over the loss of their mate, some of which may be justified while others are not.

[41 : 31] The grieving process is a highly individualized experience, and one's peculiar grief cannot be applied to everyone. There are many variable and complex dynamics that make up the distinctive relationship of each couple, and no two connections are exactly alike.

And when a connection is broken through death, it's an intensely personal thing that has occurred, personal and peculiar to that couple alone in so many ways.

The death of a spouse leaves the survivors so grief-stricken, it is not likely they can see it at all as God working anything together for their good or anyone else's good.

In fact, to even suggest it to the grieving mate would be grossly insensitive or perhaps even an act of cruelty to do so, because their grief, which is very natural and legitimate, would not for a moment allow them to consider their mate's passing as good, and certainly not an expression of God using it as something he will work for the good of the surviving spouse or of the one who departed.

In fact, they may even resent someone quoting Romans 8.28 to them in a feeble, well-meaning attempt to comfort them. And having said that, and fully understanding from experience the terrible pain caused by a loved one's death, Romans 8.28 remains as true today as the day God inspired the Apostle Paul to write it.

[43 : 11] Our problem with the text is that we want to see the good it's supposed to produce now, not sometime in the by-and-by. And in many cases, we will not, perhaps even in our own lifetime, see the good God brought through such a loss.

But one day, when that veil is pulled back, we will see from God's perfect perspective that He knew exactly what He was doing and permitting, and wonder of wonders, it was not only for our good, but good for the deceased as well.

Perspective is everything. Remember? Pain from the Loss of a Mate, Part 2 We have spoken briefly about the pain experienced from the loss of one's mate.

We described it as an involuntary loss. By that, we mean our mate did not leave us of their own free will, but they died involuntarily as in a serious illness or accidentally.

They couldn't help it that they died. But there is another loss of one's mate that has become increasingly common in today's world. It's the loss of one's mate via divorce that is all too frequent.

[44 : 32] This represents a voluntary loss, that is, a departure from the marriage because one chooses to depart. This is a deliberate loss.

And while it's sometimes true, there may be a mutuality in bringing about the cleavage so that both partners may speak of the other as good riddance, and both are glad to call it quits.

But nonetheless, it still represents a loss and an undeniable expression of rejection, no matter which one initiated or insisted on the divorce.

And even if it's a pain induced by a feeling of good riddance, pain is pain and rejection is rejection, it still hurts a lot.

In fact, in the area of relationships, there is no pain equal to that of rejection, especially in marriage. And if a third party is involved, the rejection is intensified because now we are being rejected in place of someone else who is being accepted into the position we should occupy.

[45 : 42] This pain, pain caused by the voluntary action of one's mate because they prefer someone else, has been described by many as a pain worse than that of the death of one's spouse.

At least in that case, they were left by the one who did so against their will. They did not volunteer to leave us. Their doing so was contrary to their will. But one initiating a divorce action is fully involved with their will to do so.

Now, are we going to say excruciating pain caused from this kind of experience is something that God is committed to working for our good?

Are we going to say that crying oneself to sleep at night and scarcely being able to function is something God is working for one's good? That is precisely what we are saying.

More importantly, this is what the text is saying. And it's true whether we believe it or not. Oh, the time will come when it will be believed, but in the meanwhile, a lot of misery can be racked up because it isn't believed.

[46 : 53] It's that perspective thing again, and ours is very limited. But God's isn't, and he's the one who is committed to working all things together for our good. His perspective is good, and his timing is good, and this is how he works all things together for our good.

You can believe it or not, but you probably already know the lack of benefits from not believing it. Only in believing it are the benefits of peace available.

Otherwise, more pain and unrest are on the way. Pain from the loss of a child Those who have experienced the death of one's child know it to be a pain unlike any other.

And no matter the age of the child, even if an adult, the parental feeling is always there. Though far removed from our being responsible for them as when they were in our care, still, we never lose some sense of responsibility simply because we were the ones who brought them into the world.

And our love and parental care for them extends far beyond their maturing into adulthood and that natural anticipation is for the older generation to precede the younger in death.

[48 : 11] The norm, if we can call it that, is for the children to bury their parents, not vice versa. But sometimes that norm is not realized and parents endure the excruciating pain of seeing a child go before them.

And it is truly indescribable. After all, we are legally and morally responsible for our children and we may feel charged to fix whatever may be wrong with them with the proper medical attention, doctors, hospitals, etc.

And if we cannot succeed in that for whatever reason, there may be a deep sense of failure settled in on the parent and that's not unusual. The failure feeling is seldom justified but the feeling is real nonetheless.

This is the painful dynamic of the death of a child via an incurable illness or an accident. And parents needlessly torture themselves with the what could I have done differently to forestall this?

But then there is another kind of death of a child that we cannot call anything less than a voluntary death.

[49 : 27] A mother with or without the agreement of the father may voluntarily terminate the life of her unborn child via the process of abortion.

And over 55 million such voluntary executions have been carried out during the past half century. While usually seen as the only reasonable option at the time many have afterward been bathed in guilt and regret for years to come.

If only they had opportunity to face that issue again they would have opted for the life not the death of that precious baby. But there are no do-overs.

Death whether of the unborn or of a 90-year-old is a very final permanent reality at least as far as this world is concerned. Yet despite the unspeakable brutality of the abortion decision and its procedure there is forgiveness and the grace of God is extended through Jesus Christ even in such an extreme as this.

If this isn't true then the price Jesus Christ paid for our sin was insufficient. A thought utterly unthinkable. This forgiveness realized is the only thing that will allow a mother who has aborted her child or children to ever enjoy a release from the guilt and remorse of her decision.

[50 : 54] We can only urge any and all such women to turn to Christ for the healing he alone can provide. Countering Any and all pain part one This verse and the principle it sets forth is God's panacea for every hurt and heartache we can experience whether it's physical or emotional.

It assures us that no matter how unlikely or even how impossible it seems God will do what he has promised for each and every one who belongs to him.

And what has he promised? He has promised to work all things together for the good of those who love him. It's the great 828 of the letter to the Romans. Romans 828 I know I know it sounds too good to be true.

So does the gospel people but it's true nevertheless. And while we are in the throes of pain from some kind of loss all we can think about is how much we hurt.

And along with it we are wondering where God is and if he loves me so much why isn't he doing something about this? You may be agonizing over a lost love a lost mate a prodigal child into drugs and waywardness over whom you have spent sleepless nights or perhaps it's the intense pain inflicted by a terminal disease that leaves you looking forward only to the next injection of a painkiller.

[52 : 34] Losses abound among the children of men and some are indescribable in their intensity. We do not in any way dismiss or minimize this reality.

We are only saying that however bad it is it is temporal and will lead to subsiding or result in your going to be with Christ. Nothing temporal about that.

God and he alone is the master orchestrator and in his infinite knowledge wisdom and power he is able and committed to making all things work together for your good.

There's no question about that because he has already committed himself to doing that. The question is whether or not we believe he will make good on his word. It's called trusting God, trusting him in the deep, dark, and terribly painful times.

This trust on our part will test our mettle. We'll find out what we're made of only in our response to adversity.

[53 : 41] This is the testing area, not in prosperity, but in adversity. this very thing is precisely what the whole account of Job is all about.

And after thousands of years, Job remains God's poster boy for what it means to believe God when everything that happens to you militates against it.

This believing and trusting in God is the only possible path to that peace which passes all understanding, even in the midst of our pain, whatever its source.

This may well be the greatest aspect of our salvation while yet living in this world. That incredible peace that truly does surpass all understanding.

It begins with the peace that comes from God's forgiveness and then continues for every area of our being, particularly in times of loss and adversity. countering any and all pain part two.

[54 : 49] This verse, Romans 8:28, is so powerful, so pervasive, and so encompassing, it defies description. It actually contains the wherewithal to sweeten the most bitter and disappointing event ever to enter the life of a child of God.

It possesses the ability to turn night into day, sorrow into joy, and despair into confidence. But its ability is limited to those who love God and are called according to God's purpose.

This promise is not for the general population of humanity, but is available only for the redeemed. Furthermore, even among this select group of Christians, it is limited to those who believe insofar as obtaining the benefits are concerned.

So many Christians, while going through very painful and trying times resulting from physical pain or emotional pain or both, just cannot or will not allow themselves to believe it.

Because for them, this pain is just too great to believe that God works all things together for their good. good. The only perspective they have is the one gathered from where they are at present, and it looks like anything but God working anything together for their good.

[56 : 09] They think, if that is what God is doing, pray tell me, when is he going to start? Of course, it seems utterly inconceivable that God has already started, and that the pain is an integral part of that working?

But it is. Even if you don't believe it, it is. God couples all our bitter negatives and mixes them with events and experiences that he fashions in the amount he allows and in the timing he commands to bring about our ultimate good.

But it is in our reluctance or even our refusal to believe this that we are robbed of the peace and stability it could bring. Only those who believe Romans 8:28 can enjoy the benefits of it in the present.

And what are the immediate benefits? They are the joy and peace even in the midst of a storm. It is the confidence that comes to the believer who is trusting in the Lord while undergoing the pain.

This was the attitude of Job, of whom we spoke earlier, when he uttered that monumental statement, though he slay me. Yet will I trust him. In the very midst of suffering, the loss of everything, Job lost his wealth, his children, his support of his wife, and then the loss of his own health.

[57 : 34] About the only thing Job didn't lose was the miserable comfort from his supposed friends who unjustly charged him with hypocrisy. Was Job out of his mind and delirious with pain?

Not at all. Job was a man who simply knew that God was right in all his dealings with his children, and he can and should be relied upon to ultimately work all things to man's benefit and God's glory.

But God does these things from his perspective and in his timing, both of which are as flawless as his God himself. Can you believe that?

Even in the midst of your pain and pain and all pain part 3 The singular point we are trying to make in the countering of any and all pain is very simple but very profound.

And here it is. By merely being a believer in the finished work of Jesus Christ on that cross, all who are in Christ by faith are then in a win-win situation, no matter what they face, no matter how serious or how painful their loss or losses may be.

[58 : 56] And it is all because of the incredible breadth and depth of what occurred on Calvary. In providing the sacrifice of his own son, God was doing and giving the very utmost he could.

So, having done the greatest thing for man, how could he not then also do the lesser thing? And what would that be? That would be God working all things for good for those who love him.

These are the all lesser things in comparison to that greater thing. Such is the very argument Paul is making in Romans 8.32 by saying, He who did not spare his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?

What then again are the all things? Everything that's left, all things. Sounds like an umbrella provision, does it not?

Well, it is. Included under that umbrella are the all things, and most assuredly, the all things must mean God is working all things together for our good.

[60 : 19] Really? Really. Then what have you to worry about? Not a blessed thing. But what about your pain and your losses?

They are real, and they do hurt, sometimes more than you can tell, but that does not negate the truth of Romans 8.28, or of 8.32.

The Apostle Paul is trying to reassure believers that no matter their problems, pains, heartaches, and losses, God is committed to making all those truly hurtful things into an ultimate outcome that will be for your good, not your ill.

Paul himself speaks from personal pains and losses the likes of which we cannot even imagine, and in the midst of them all, God inspired him to give us Romans 8.28.

I don't know of anyone who needed that confidence more than Paul in what he suffered for Christ, and I've no doubt Paul fully believed the truth of Romans 8.28.

[61 : 28] The question is, do we? Because if we do, it is the very basis for rejoicing in tribulation when your world is collapsing, because you know, you absolutely know and believe that he who does all things well is fully committed and capable of making all things come together for your good, no matter how great your pain at the present.

countering any and all pain part four one can only wonder the difference that would be made in the Christian community if those in Christ actually believed what the Bible says about them.

The pity parties would come to an end. The why me syndrome would disappear. Charging God foolishly would not be heard. An unbridled and well-founded optimism would prevail everywhere the name of Christ was named.

And none of it would be due to wish fulfillment or the power of positive thinking or trying to follow some TV preacher's six rules for a happy life and I'll send you my book when we receive your most generous donation.

This desperately needed optimism is based upon biblical realism. It's real that God loves you. It's real that God loved you in such a way that he gave his own son to die for you.

[63 : 03] It's real that the son loved you in such a way that he was willing to die for you. It's real that in Christ dying for our sins he succeeded in balancing the moral scales of the universe.

It's real in so doing God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. It's real that his death opened the way of access to come to an otherwise unapproachable God.

It's real that all who do so become members of the spiritual body of Christ of which he is the head and thus are said to be in Christ.

It's real in that since God is for you who can be against you in any way that can possibly matter. It's real in that nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus and it's real that God is personally committed to working all things together for your good and bless God he is doing so according to his knowledge of your good and not with what our limited perspective would call our good.

God and God alone knows what your true and best good really is. We don't. We only think we do from time to time but we are simply not aware of how little we know and how even less do we understand.

[64 : 40] Only an infinitely wise and powerful God is capable of taking all of life's pluses and minuses all of the hurt and pain all of the works of the flesh and fruit of the spirit the good things we do and the bad and orchestrate them in such a way that they turn out for our good.

And none of this is based merely on the right things we do but also includes the wrong things we do. Now I can see eyebrows raised over this.

The wrong things we do also in the mix? The outcome of which God is working those things for our good? Ha ha! Absolutely! An upcoming is the explanation.

It's really something. The Contribution of Our Sin There is absolutely nothing in the mind and heart of God that He sees so ugly as the sin of His creatures.

You and me and all of the rest of this humanity in its multiple billions. Our sin and rebellion against His love and righteous authority were so great and malignant that only the sacrificial death of a member of the triune Godhead could address it.

[66 : 11] And He did by paying the supreme penalty for sin which is death. Christ died our death for us so we could live unto God in a state of full free forgiveness forever.

It's the ultimate transaction of the entire universe and it all took place in the space of 72 hours nearly 2,000 years ago.

And again what was that all about? It was about our sin. Our sin was the singular contribution we made to the plan of our redemption.

Now please listen carefully to Colossians 2 verses 13 and 14 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh He made you alive together with Him having forgiven us all our transgressions having cancelled out the debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us and He has taken it out of the way having nailed it to the cross.

Can you grasp the scope of this? It was so great that it even satisfied the righteous demands of the utterly holy God His Father.

[67 : 40] This entire transaction of Christ dying for our sin was surely the basis and supreme manifestation of God's intent to work all things together for our good.

And in human space and time it all began at Calvary. In God's reckoning Christ was the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world.

And do you not see and is it not abundantly clear that God includes and uses even our sin as part of the mix that God calls us all things to work together for our good?

Surely you don't think that God is limited and can only use our good things to work together for our good. They already do. But God is committed even to making our sin work together for our good while He remains utterly apart from our sin nor does He entice us to sin.

If God can only use the good things we do to work together for our good, well, who couldn't do that? They already do. It's the bad things we do, the dumb things we do, the irresponsible things we do, and yes, even the sinful things we do that present the real and demanding challenge for God to work even those together for our good.

[69 : 02] That's how He loves us and is committed to our ultimate good. Believing it because it's true.

We've called Romans 8:28 God's panacea for all the pains of every sort sustained by those who are in Christ. But be reminded this panacea, or the believer's cure-all for all our pain, does belong exclusively to believers.

believers. It is God who works all things together for good to those who love God. Those who don't are on their own. His providential care is limited to those belonging to Him, and those who choose not to belong to Him are not beneficiaries of His working all things together for good.

Be advised also, this does not mean all things that happen to us are good. Some of them are bad, very bad, and extremely painful.

The text means that God will use those bad things as part of the ingredients which He will mix and coordinate with all the other things and orchestrate the combination to be for our ultimate good.

[70 : 21] And therein lies another thought. God is not committed to making all things for our immediate good. If that were so, our lives would be filled with just one good thing after another exclusively.

But we know life does not work that way. The verse implies a process. There is a working that God does, and it always involves time.

It is for our ultimate good, with which God is concerned, and has promised as an outcome, not as an immediate reality. The process includes all the negatives we may pour into it, and the negatives others may contribute to it.

Lost loves, lost mates, lost children, lost health and wealth all contribute to the process. They are all negatives, and they all hurt.

They can be agonizing and bitter, even unto death. But in that final analysis, we shall clearly see how all those painful things, none of which we bargain for, will culminate in something utterly beautiful, the ultimate good toward which God is working.

[71 : 39] Many will see that good played out in this life, as did Job. Others, like John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, whose lives ended at the edge of an executioner's axe, they would not see how God worked all things for their good, not until they arrived at the presence of the Lord himself.

And so it may be with some of us. But be assured and take great comfort in the truth that God who cannot lie has promised. Paul said, And we know that God works all things together for our good.

Let that truth temper your pain from whatever source it is. Let that powerful concept control your outlook and disposition, no matter the pain you are experiencing.

And why should you? Because it is sublimely true. You need no other reason. If we do believe it, our only reasonable result will be one of rejoicing.

You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. Preview of Upcoming Volume 24 This present volume of Christianity Clarified we are now concluding contains such important material and is applicable to so many people, we feel compelled to elaborate upon it further.

[73 : 24] Therefore, Volume 24 will offer further clarification upon the concept of Romans 8:28 and related passages. There is much involved here that is subject to misunderstanding.

Some may even get the impression that since God is committed to working all things for our good, and that he even includes our sin in doing so, it really then doesn't matter how we live because it will all work out for our own good regardless.

Because some may actually perceive that to be the case, it becomes imperative that further clarification be given. The subject of human pain is one of such reality to us all at whatever stage of life we may be, whether the pain is physical or emotional, it pertains to us all, and if not now, then surely later.

So if you find the upcoming content on Volume 24 to be helpful, we hope you will consider sharing it with others. Perhaps you can share your own CD volume with them, or tell them how they may acquire their own by simply going online at gracebiblespringfield.com.

That's all one word, gracebiblespringfield.com. They may then make the selection they wish from the items available, all at no charge.

[74 : 48] Thanking you for being a recipient of Christianity Clarified, this is Pastor Marv Wiseman.
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