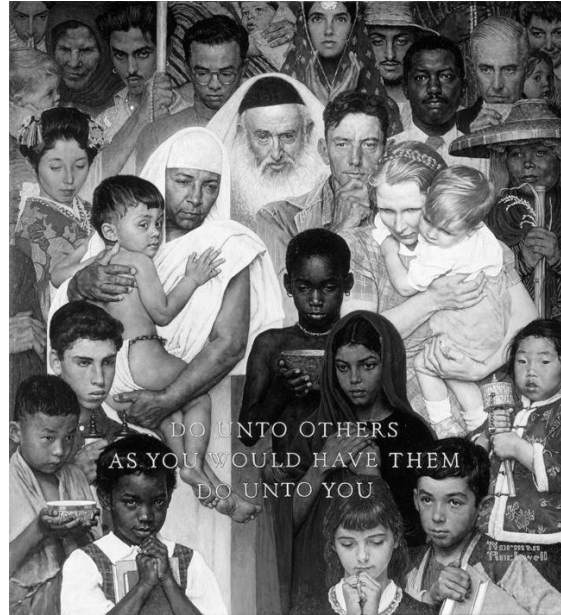


GOD ALLOWS U TURNS



Scripture:

Psalm 37:1-9

¹Do not fret because of the wicked; do not be envious of wrongdoers, ²for they will soon fade like the grass, and wither like the green herb.

³Trust in the LORD, and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security. ⁴Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

⁵Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. ⁶He will make your vindication shine like the light, and the justice of your cause like the noonday.

⁷Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him; do not fret over those who prosper in their way, over those who carry out evil devices.

⁸Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath. Do not fret—it leads only to evil. ⁹For the wicked shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

2nd Timothy 1:7-10

⁷for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

⁸Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, ⁹who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



GOD ALLOWS U TURNS

Who here plays or watches Jeopardy? So you know how this works. Who is this?

Here's a Final Jeopardy question for you: The Apostle Paul met him during his second missionary journey and he became Paul's companion and co-worker along with Silas to help them develop churches. Paul entrusted him with important guiding principals that he wrote to him in two letters. This man also acted as a representative of the Apostle Paul to ensure that the churches were doing things the way Christ would have them do. You have thirty seconds to answer.

Who is... (answer) Timothy?

LETTERS TO TIMOTHY

Today's passage contains some of the last words Paul wrote in letters to Timothy to share with the churches he helped establish. There is some question among Biblical scholars about whether this letter was really written by Paul because it does not include some of the patterns of his past writings. Some others believe it is more like Paul's writings than the letter in 1st Timothy. Nevertheless, there is much to learn from this passage as a reflection of God's message to us whether it was written directly by Paul or by one of his followers who was with him in his ministry around the time Paul died.

In this passage Paul is exhorting Timothy to be brave, to embrace the spirit of power and love and of self-discipline. He tells him to not be afraid or ashamed, but to embrace suffering for God. Timothy took Paul's teachings to heart very seriously all his life.

WHO WAS TIMOTHY?

But who was the disciple, Timothy, really? We know much more about Timothy than most of the other of Paul's disciples because part of his life was recorded in the book of Acts, and he is also mentioned in Paul's letters to the churches. The New

Testament Apocrypha also contains the *Acts of Timothy* book that didn't make it into the Canon but is acknowledged as validated Christian scripture recorded in the fifth century AD.

From Biblical history there is evidence that Timothy's mother and grandmother were very important in his life of faith development. They taught him both Judaism and Christianity as a child because his mother was a Jew and his father was Greek. When Timothy and his family first heard about Paul and his preaching about Jesus, they all became Christ followers. This made Timothy a perfect missionary to work alongside Paul in his final year of mission ministry since Paul had grown up Jewish, too. They could both speak with authority to the Jews about Jesus being their Messiah.

Paul and Timothy traveled together to the churches in Corinth, Macedonia, Thessalonica, Philippi, Ephesus, and Rome. Before Paul died, he told Timothy to stay in Ephesus to deal with the false teachers there. Timothy died in the year 97 AD when a mob stoned him to death for opposing their worship of the Goddess Diana.

In Chapter 4 of 2nd Timothy Paul is anticipating his own death when he writes a quote that is often repeated in our modern times, too:
***"I have fought a good fight,
I have finished my course,
I have kept the faith."***

And when they arrived in heaven, God surely said to Paul and to Timothy, "Well Done Good and Faithful Servants."

THE GOLDEN RULE

For World Communion Sunday today, I put the *Golden Rule* quote on the bulletin cover: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," from Matthew 7:12

Did you know this rule is also quoted in many other faiths from around the world? In

addition to Christianity, the many world religions that quote a similar sentiment as our Golden Rule, also known as the *Universal Law*, are:

Hinduism
Baha'i Faith
Islam
Judaism
Jainism
Zoroastrianism
Native Spirituality
Unitarianism
Sikhism
Taoism
Confucianism
Buddhism

This rule is important to live by, yet it is also important to understand that nothing separates us from the love of God. Nothing! Even when we fail at the Golden Rule.

U TURNS

When we accidentally hurt others or go off the straight and narrow path that God wants us to follow, God allows U turns. We can go back and ask forgiveness. We can go back and try again to stay up on the path that God has laid out for us to follow.

When you find yourself going the wrong way, thank goodness God allows U turns no matter how many times you have tried and failed.

Allison Bottke knows this well. She is an author of twenty-five books and a popular speaker at Christian conferences. Her first book was titled *God Allows U Turns*. In it she tells her personal testimony about how she experienced God's forgiveness. Allison said, "It is difficult to see God when our lives are a mess. I did not think God was so great when my now ex-husband was dragging me up a flight of stairs by my hair. No way did I think God was good when my bones ached from punches and kicks. And when my eyes burned from hot tears of despair, God did not seem to watch over me as I was promised in my Sunday School days."

In her book she describes her young life as a teenage battered wife who had given up on God. At the age of sixteen she already was divorced and a single mother dependent on drugs, alcohol and over-eating. By her late twenties she was on the path of self-destruction with no way out in sight.

Then one night she found herself stumbling down a different street than she usually walked to go home and her legs led her up the steps of a church where they were having a Wednesday evening worship service in Orange, CA.

Once inside she snuck up to the balcony where she sat all alone gazing at the majesty of the beautiful stained glass windows and gleaming dark woodwork. Then she saw the statue of Jesus with outstretched hands looking right at her. Tears fell from her eyes and a warm feeling filled her heart and soul.

**She wondered why she was sitting
in a strange church crying
like a baby all alone.
Then she realized it was
meant to be that way.
Allison needed to acknowledge
Jesus alone and allow him
to touch her soul with
hope, faith, and forgiveness.**

When the pastor began to speak, it was a message Allison thought was designed especially for her. He spoke about being lost, without direction, having no hope, no faith, and that it did not need to be like that. He preached that if she just asked Jesus to come into her heart, he would be there, just like that. He quoted Isaiah 53:5-6 that says, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on himself the iniquity of us all."

Through hearing that passage Allison felt total forgiveness and she changed the course of her life that day. She made a huge U turn and decided to develop her relationship with God. She chose 2nd Corinthians 5:17 as her favorite New Testament passage, and it became the theme for her *God Allows U Turns* project and books. It states: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation; the old is gone, the new has come!"

**Allison says, "Jesus took my broken spirit and my lost soul and turned me completely around, setting me on a new course. He filled the empty place in my soul that I was trying so desperately to fill with drugs, alcohol, relationships, material goods, and work. He forgave my sins that weighed heavily on my heart and showed me I no longer had to carry the burdens alone...."
Jesus will do the same for you if you ask.**

Allison's *God Allows U Turns* books have story after story of ways God allowed people to make U turns and find a better way of faithful living.

Remember God gave you a spirit of power and love and a sound mind. If you forget to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, God will let you turn around, repent or apologize if you can, and try again. Don't be afraid to make a U turn once you see you are going the wrong direction. God will make a way for you to get back up on the path of peace. Amen

Benediction: We are to have no fear of this world that God created out of love. May you feel the power of that love everyday and use it to show care and compassion to others.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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