

**JEREMIAH 33:3 "CALL TO ME" GROUP BIBLE STUDIES – LEADER'S STUDY -
LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES**

LESSON #12 – A CHRISTIAN'S CALL TO COMFORT OR CROSS

A CHRISTIAN'S CALL – We are fully aware that we are swimming against popular opinion when we say that doing God's will, and calling to Him with our prayers, may not always lead to increased popularity, sales, or good health. We are not in the mainstream of "pop" theology when we maintain that if you call to the Lord, even with faith and confidence you may not always have a long life with a total absence of pain. Coming to the Lord didn't do those things in Bible days and our lesson says it probably won't do so now. Our lesson deals with a Christian's call to a cross. We begin with prayer:

THE PRAYER – Dear Father, we know that when we submit to Your will, everything in our lives, comes under Your supervision and control. Of course, dear Lord, these things have always been right there. It is just that when we submit to Your authority we are realizing, and recognizing, Your great power. Knowing that You care, we are able to call upon You with confidence...even when we are in the presence of a cross. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

ILLUSTRATION - It was during World War II, that a farmer near London wrote to the *Scripture Gift Mission*. With his letter he enclosed a five-shilling (\$1.25) offering. The content of his letter was simple: he requested prayer so that no bombs would drop on his small farm. His harvest already didn't look good. Rain had been scarce and now he was buying water. The secretary of the *Mission* wrote back and said he could not ask that, but instead would pray that God's will might be done. It was not long afterward that Hitler's biggest bomb came down on this man's farm. The bomb was so big that when it exploded, it broke every window in the man's house. Had the prayer been ignored? Not really. The bomb moved enough dirt to unearth a spring. The spring watered this man's farm, and allowed him to share water with others. After a good harvest, the farmer sent in a generous thank-offering and said he could now see how the Lord, in His own way, had done 'abundantly better than he could have imagined.' The farmer had learned to understand that the Lord occasionally calls His people to a cross so they can receive a blessing.

SATAN'S SUMMONS –Such an understanding stands in stark contrast to the summons of Satan. The old evil foe would have Christians believe that, in this life, a REAL follower of God, will walk only upon a smooth path; will waltz through beautiful days and will always enjoy cross-free nights. Satan summons us to believe that if we have any kind of problem, pain, hurt or ache, it is because our faith is weak, or the Lord simply doesn't care about us. Satan summons us to call upon God, not for the purpose of knowing the Lord's will, but getting Him to approve our own.

THOUGHT: If we are to call upon the Lord, as He wishes us to, it is necessary that we have a proper understanding of our relationship with Him. Are we in control, or is God? Do we know what is best, or does He. Does being our heavenly Father mean that God will give His followers a life without any kind of cross. The answers to those questions will determine the way we approach Him; what we can expect of Him. In order to find answers to these questions, it is right for us to turn to the Word.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH 1 – Please look at these texts and answer the questions which follow:

TEXT	QUESTION	ANSWER
Exodus 24: 7	What did the people do first/second. Who was in control/Whose will should be done?	They listened and said they would obey God. The Lord.
Psalm 50:15	What are we to do? When are we to do that? What can we expect then?	Call upon the Lord. In the day of trouble. He will deliver us.
Proverbs 3:5	Should we do anything in gratitude? What are we to do? What should we avoid?	We should glorify Him. Trust in the Lord with our entire heart. Our own understanding.
Proverbs 3:6	What should we do/When should we do it? What will happen then? Who is in control?	Acknowledge the Lord/all the time. He will direct us. God is.

FIRST APPLICATION: From these passages, and many like them, there can be little question that the Lord wishes, and should, remain in control. He is the Father; we are the children. He holds the power; we have the need. He is the Giver, we are the suppliants. Beyond the promises He has made to us in His Word, He is not obligated to give us anything. Of course, there are those who will ask, 'doesn't God want, and hasn't He

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promised, to give us what we ask?'

To find an answer, take a look at these passages, identify the person(s) praying and answer how God responded to their requests:

TEXT	QUESTION	ANSWER
Deut. 3: 23-27	Who prayed? What was God's reply?	Moses prayed to enter the promised land. No, He didn't want to hear it. Moses would not go in.
Matthew 26:42	Who prayed? For what? What did God do? Why would God do that?	Jesus. That the cup of suffering would be removed. Had His Son drink from that cup. Jesus had to suffer and die so we could be saved.
John 11:1-3	Who prayed? For what?	Mary and Martha, that Jesus would come to heal Lazarus.
John 11:23, 41-43	What did Jesus do? v. 23	Brought Lazarus back to life.
John 11:15, 42	Why did that happen?	So people might believe.
2 Cor. 12: 8-9	Who prayed? For what? What happened?	Paul/ That the thorn in the flesh might be removed. Paul learned God's strength was made perfect in his weakness.

THOUGHT : God does not always give His people exactly what they have asked for, the way they ask for it or when they ask for it. The Lord's Fatherly love, and His Divine perspective, lead Him to override our narrow and near sighted perspective and do what is right, and best, from His point of view. That may even mean the Lord that some unpleasant things may come our way.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH 2 - CHRIST'S CALL - Look at these passages and see what the Lord promises:

TEXT	QUESTION	ANSWER
Matthew 10:38	What does the Lord say His followers should do?	Take up their cross.
Luke 14: 27	What does discipleship demand?	That we carry our cross.
Look at 2 Corinthians 11 and see what kind of crosses the Apostle Paul had to carry during his life?		
v. 24 – Thirty-nine lashes		
v. 25 – 3 times beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked		
v. 26 – On the move, in danger from rivers/bandits/Jews/Gentiles/in the city in the country/at sea/from false Christians. Concern for others.		
v. 27 - been without sleep, been hungry, thirsty, naked.		

THOUGHT AND ILLUSTRATION - The life-witness of Paul shows us that God's ways are not our ways; His thoughts, not ours. Nevertheless, as obedient children we continue to call upon Him in prayer, trusting that He will do what is right.

If, at times, it doesn't seem that the Lord is doing the right thing, we remember to trust him...just like a young man did, many years ago. He had taken an extended vacation with some friends. As often happens, all too quickly he spent the funds that had been given him for the trip and he wrote home for some financial assistance. His father, thinking this was the ideal time to teach his son the value of money, did not respond to the request. The young man's companions wondered why the father seemed so cruel as to turn their friend down. It just didn't seem very caring. The young man, although he did not understand the entire lesson, replied, "I'll wait till I get home, and dad will tell me himself."

That's the kind of attitude we need to have toward the Lord. We call upon Him for His guidance and direction. And, if it seems that He is ignoring us, or that our prayers appear to be unanswered, we need to continue to trust Him. He is sovereign and He will work things out according to His plan and to our best interests. (*Ephesians 1:11*). That is the confidence that Lutheran Hour Ministries has as we bring Christ to the nations and the nations to the church.

THE WAY OF PRAYER – Dear Lord, grant us a sincere desire to serve You and humankind. Give us the wisdom and trust to stop doubting You and stop thinking negatively. Grant us Your Spirit to start living by faith, praying earnestly and humbly, and looking expectantly to You for the best. In Jesus' Name. Amen.