

“The Crook in the Lot”

In this short series on Psalm 142 we’ve been looking at the fact that God is our refuge in time of need. He cares for his children completely. Even though others may desert us, he never will. As we conclude this particular series, I want to make some practical application by pointing, once again, to the comforting doctrines of God’s sovereignty and providence. If you’re unfamiliar with the words “sovereignty” and “providence,” they basically speak of the biblical teaching of the full and complete control of God over all the events of life. “The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.” (Proverbs 16:9) This truth is taught in multiple places in scripture including: Psalm 103:19; Daniel 4:35; Matthew 10:29; Ephesians 1:11-12; Hebrews 1:3 and Revelation 4:11 just to give a few references.

As we think of God’s full and complete control over all of life, I want to reference a book entitled, “The Crook in the Lot” by Scottish Presbyterian pastor and author, Thomas Boston (1676-1732). The copy of the book that I own is published by Banner of Truth Trust and the forward is written by 21st century Scottish pastor and author, Ian Hamilton. The following comes, primarily, from his forward to Boston’s helpful book. The phrase, “The Crook in the Lot” may seem enigmatic but it’s a great title. The word “lot” is used by Thomas Boston to speak of our “lot in life” that is to say, the shape of our lives styled by God’s providences. By “crook” Boston speaks of unforeseen troubles (thorns) that afflict, unsettle, or disturb us in any way. These are the things that the apostle Paul, in Romans 8:18, calls, “the sufferings of this present time.” Thomas Boston gives us three *propositions* about God’s work in our lives and these will be our application.

Application:

—“Whatsoever crook there is in one’s lot, it is of God’s making.” Thomas Boston is teaching us here that everyone has difficulties in life and those difficulties are, ultimately, under the sovereign control of God (although mankind is personally responsible for the sins we choose to commit). Crooks in our lot are a part of our life this side of heaven. This is true for everyone—not just Christians. Satan may tempt us to believe that other people aren’t burdened with the problems that Christians have but, obviously, everyone has problems. Our trials can benefit us and suffering may draw some non-Christians to Christ (John 6:44).

—“What God sees meet (appropriate) to mar (ruin), no one shall be able to mend in his lot.” Again, Boston wants us to know that God is in complete control. This is not to say that we’re to adopt a posture of “que sera, sera, whatever will be, will be.” Boston simply means that, if our crook is to be mended it’s only God who will ultimately bring it about. We should pray; we should do all that we can lawfully do to work through our problems. Still, we must always depend upon God in every situation. Boston writes that it’s critical that Christians understand the importance of God’s providences in our lives which will help us to bear them. “If you would, in a Christian manner, set yourselves to bear the crook, you would find it easier than you imagine.” It was Jesus who said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle

and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:29-30)

—“The considering the crook in the lot as the work of God, is a proper means to bring one to behave rightly under it.” Boston is teaching us that if we understand and embrace this truth, it will go a long way to helping us bear up under our burdens. We want to exhibit the kind of humility that receives and is willing to accept all that the Lord pleases to bring into our lives, for good or for ill. It’s one thing to pray that God will give us relief from suffering but we need to be content until such time that God chooses—if he chooses—to give us relief.

In this Psalm, David went from desperation and desertion, i.e., believing that everyone had left him entirely, to a declaration: God please cause good to come out of my difficult circumstances. As we conclude this series, please remember that—although we’re responsible for our sins and actions—God is sovereign over every detail of our lives. Because of Jesus, Christians are never truly deserted by God no matter how it seems in the moment.

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