

01.26.25

Luke

Chapter 3 - A Different Kind of Authority

A Power to Wash Obscurity Away (vs. 15-17)

Luke 3:15-17: Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. “His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

I hope you're falling in love with the Book of Luke. I know I do. He's calling upon people that you would go, “Well, that's unlikely.” And all the way through the book, you

really begin to see individuals that you wouldn't normally think would be the ones that Christ would call. Even at the very beginning of the book, as it starts off with Zacharias; of course, he's a priest. So, you think, "Ok, God's got to really work through this man because he's the priest." But it really is his wife within the text, and he's not really believing the way that he should, and God says, "Ok, we'll go through her." And Mary takes a predominant position within the Book of Luke. Only in the Gospel of Luke do you see this, by the way.

So, by the time we come to chapter 3 at the very beginning, Luke lists the "who's who" of what we would perceive to be great people. But really, it's the "who's who" of miserable people because it talks about the Caesar, and it talks about Pontius Pilate, the governor and the king of Judah, and all those things, but he purposely makes this list in Luke 3:1 so that you would know He knows who's there. He even actually lists the high priest, and you go, "Well, God's going to talk through the Caesar; He's going to talk through the high priest, somebody really great, and God goes, "Nope. John the Baptist. This

guy coming from the wilderness.” Scripture tells us that he really kind of fulfills the prophecy of Malachi, which he would be like Elijah.

You go back into the Book of 2 Kings; at the very beginning of 2 Kings in Chapter 1, it starts off with the king of Israel or Judah at that time was really not following the Lord. I don't know exactly what he was doing, but Scripture says that he fell through the lattice, and he hurt himself and he became deathly ill. So, instead of calling on God, he sends out the messengers to go ask Baal-zebub what to do. As they're on their way to go to wherever they need to go for that, they run into Elijah, and God tells Elijah because they didn't ask God and they asked Baal-zebub instead, “You tell him he's a dead man.” So, it kind of stops them dead in their track. Well, they go back to the king, and he says, “So, why are you back?” They go, “Well, this guy stopped us.” He goes, “What did he look like?” And they go, “He was a hairy guy with a with a leather belt.” And that's how he was described. Really, Elijah comes out of fundamentally nowhere and the same way with John the Baptist, and you're going,

“Where did this guy come from?” And then he comes with all this sense of authority, and you go, “That's an unlikely person to bring the message of the proclamation of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. That's very unlikely that You would use somebody.” And God goes, “That's what I do.”

So, all the way through the Book of Luke, you see these unlikelies. In the Gospel of Luke, one of the good people that he mentions is the Good Samaritan. Well, of course the Jews would go, “It's highly unlikely that there would be a Good Samaritan on this planet.” And yet God will elevate them to that position. Only in the Gospel of Luke will He talk about the prodigal son. Only the Gospel of Luke will you have this woman that comes up off the street, a woman of the streets, and she's washing Jesus' feet with her hair and her tears. It's only in the Gospel of Luke and you go, “Highly unlikely that she would” and Jesus turns to the Pharisee, and He goes, “This woman loves me more than you do.” You go, “Wow.” And it's only the Gospel of Luke that makes reference to the man on the cross that turns to Him, and he goes, “We deserve

this, but certainly not Him. Remember me.” And God says, “I’ll remember you.” So, all the way through the Gospel of Luke, you have these unlikely incidences and people that you wouldn’t normally think of. You not only have an unlikely messenger within Luke 3, but you have a message that seems very unusual because it’s very authoritative; so authoritative that people are confessing and the people that you wouldn’t normally think were would be. One of the people that is confessing within the text is a tax collector, and he comes up to John the Baptist, and he goes, “What do I need to do?” You go, “What gets a tax collector to ask a question like that?” It goes on and says in verse 14, the soldiers came up and said, “What do we need to do?” So, what we have is a powerful conviction with this message. It is not the individual that seems to be meriting their repentance. In other words, there’s nothing about John that would seem to convey to you that “Wow, these people are really scared of this guy.” But they seem to be fearful because of the power of the message itself. You almost have to ask yourself, why does God use such people?

1 Corinthians 1 says that God chooses the weak things to confound the wise, the things that are not to nullify the things that are, that no man would boast.

If you look specifically with me in 1 Corinthians 2, he really defines; Paul will even say, “And I did not even come to you with superiority of speech.” In other words, “I didn't come wowing you with my wonderful knowledge of the Sanhedrin's,” or whatever, which he probably clearly could have done, but he came in the simplicity of the message, and he said, “I came knowing nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” And you go, “Paul, how are you going to really win some people over? You have to be kind of entertaining, right? There has to be something that you do that causes people to feel this way.” And you realize that it has nothing to do with the vessel, it has everything to do with the message.

(1 Corinthians 2:2) “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

(1 Corinthians 2:3) I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,

(1 Corinthians 2:4) and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

(1 Corinthians 2:5) so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.”

See, that's the thing that really makes our message unique. We don't have to throw out bait or in any way promise somebody through bribery something's going to happen. You preach that gospel, and according to Romans 1:16, the gospel is the power of God to save. The gospel; it's powerful enough, and we rest on that. That's one of the reasons why this church has never gone into the realm of the entertainment business because the world does entertainment a lot better than I do. But it's not the entertainment that draws us. It is the truth, and the Spirit of God begins to move in our hearts, and when we hear the truth, the truth rings true in our hearts if in fact you're a truth seeker as John 3 would say. If that's true, then you're drawn to this. John begins to proclaim a message to such an extent that people are crying out, “What do we need to do?” And you realize that it's not force that's

bringing them to repentance; it's not force that's bringing them to subjugation; it's not force that's bringing them to desire to repent or to change their way of thinking. If you think about it, "repentance," as we've oftentimes defined the word, "*metanoēō*" literally means to change your mind or to change your way of thinking and the things that are being changed are their attitudes, their actions, things that they do; their affections for whatever. God is literally changing that, and He changes your appetite. God does a work through His message that does a miraculous change in our life. There's a change that happens. So, he begins to proclaim this, and you realize this is not force. This is not bribery that is changing these people. They're confessing. They're asking, "What do we need to do?" because of the power of the message.

So, right off the bat, you realize in Chapter 3 that you have this force that is not definable according to human terms. We now pick up in verse 15, and as we look at verses 15-17, we realize that there were people, and I believe God had even stirred within their hearts this sense of expectation. The word that is used within the text

“*prosdokaō*,” makes reference to they're really watching with a sense of great hope, and they really actually believe with great anticipation that something good is about to happen.

(Luke 3:15) “Now while the people were in a state of expectation...”

They were pretty excited, and they could see things were happening. Of course, John was going through and as I oftentimes made reference to it, John's not doing any miracles. You won't read one miracle that John ever does, but he has masses of people following him. I mean, it's not because he's a fancy dresser. There's nothing about the guy that would draw you to him. It reminds us of Isaiah 53, where it speaks of Christ. “He has no stately form or majesty that we should look on Him”. Once again so that you wouldn't be drawn according to the external, but that you would be drawn to the message itself. So, as he begins to proclaim this message, people begin to get excited. They're in a state of expectation, and like what most people usually do, is they begin to allow their imagination to go wild. They begin to come up with

conclusions on their own just because I guess we all feel that we're fundamentally brilliant. So, they come up with this conclusion on their own that maybe this John is the Christ.

The text reads this way,

“Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ.”

You realize that man often anticipates and the anticipation in and of itself isn't a bad thing, but once he begins to go into his own thoughts and his own imagination, it's very easy for him to perceive the wrong thing; erroneously come to conclusions. Whether or not you go to a funeral and you're hearing people; I hear people share, “Well, my sister or my brother or my father is in heaven, and they're roller skating or they're doing this.” And I'm going, “Where do you get these things from?” Some people may be right on, playing the harp, but that really is not what it says in Scripture. Anyway, people have their imaginations of what He's going to do, and they come up with erroneous conclusions about

things that are going to happen. In this particular text, the message is so powerful in its convicting people's heart that people are coming up with a conclusion, because the message is powerful, people oftentimes perceive the messenger to be great. I think it's one of the dangers of pastors at the pulpit, that they need to continually say, "I've got to decrease," like John said, "He has to increase." And if in fact, "Wow. You really fixed me." "I didn't do anything. All I did was tell you what it said. The Spirit of God changed your life" and you realize that you're a sinner saved by grace just like them. I'm a little embarrassed to say this, but I actually feel that many of you are much better than me. The more I get to know you, I go, "Wow. I'm not that nice." So, I wish you'd stop it. It's really, really making me feel bad. But the point of the gospel is this message is so powerful that it moves our hearts. It begins to stir hearts.

Once again, people come up with conclusions and let me just show you this in the Old Testament too. In Isaiah 5, it's very clear that the children of God are obviously not doing what they're supposed to be doing, and their eyes

are proud, they're arrogant, and they've been abandoning God. They're adding house upon house. So, they must be very wealthy, doing well, but they've been rejecting God.

(Isaiah 5:18) “Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood, And sin as if with cart ropes.”

In other words, they'll work hard to sin. That's a bizarre thought, isn't it? “I'm going to work hard to sin.” “Are you going to do the right thing?” “It's too hard.” I don't quite get that.

(Isaiah 5:19) “Who say, “Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it...”

Now, it's just like an arrogant person to see God as a Santa Claus and to see His coming as, “God's going to come and He's going to just really bless me.” And you say, “Why is that?” “Because I'm such a great person.” And people think that they can sin the way they sin and live the way they live and well, “God's coming. I can hardly wait for God to come.” And God goes, “I don't think you'll be excited.”

There's a passage in Amos and the people were actually longing for the day of the Lord. I hear people, "It would just be great if it were the day of the Lord." I go, "Well, I don't know. What are you doing? How are you living?"

(Amos 5:18) "Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD,

For what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you?
It will be darkness and not light;

(Amos 5:19) As when a man flees from a lion
And a bear meets him..."

"I finally outran that lion." Oops, there's a bear.

"... Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall
And a snake bites him.

(Amos 5:20) Will not the day of the LORD be darkness
instead of light,
Even gloom with no brightness in it?"

You see, people perceive in some way that they're a gift to God and whatever they do, "It's ok and we're prizes to God. God's lucky to have me, and when God comes, I just know He's going to be really glad to see me and give me a

lot of good stuff. I can hardly wait for Him to come.” It's an erroneous way of thinking because the imagination of your heart has carried you away.

So, what's interesting is the way that John responds to this. Here again, I know the initial thought is he's just putting a wet blanket on their excitement. He's not doing that, but he's causing them to think about what God is really doing, and it takes a lot for us to get on the page because we are very demanding. We're very proud. We're very arrogant, and in our arrogance, we go, “Well, I think God ought to do this.” We actually start telling God what He ought to do, and I'm going, “I don't think you want to go there because He's God. He's in heaven, you're on earth and you have no idea what you're talking about. I mean, even Isaiah the prophet in Isaiah 6, when he finally comes before the glory of God, he goes, “I have no idea what I'm talking about.” And Job, the most righteous man on the face of the earth comes before God, and he goes, “I put my hand over my mouth. I had no idea.” We have no idea. We should do more listening and less talking. God is great. God's the good One, not me.

So, we come to this passage and John responds within the passage and once again, we almost feel like he's throwing something on this.

(Luke 3:16) “John answered and said to them...”

I like the word “all” there because once again, Luke is making reference to the multitudes in this particular text. Sometimes, the basic nobodies feel like, “Well, maybe he's not talking to us.” Luke will say, “Oh, he's talking to you because it's the nobodies we're talking to.”

“John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water...”

Now, what he's talking about, of course, is the baptism of cleansing, which is repentance. In other words, he's calling upon them to change their way; to ask for washing of their sins. It's not that which will cleanse them forever, but he's saying, “You come and desire a cleansing, and that's why you come to me, because you desire that.”

“John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I...”

Now, immediately what he does is he takes the focus off of himself and he puts it on the One who it should be on. I must decrease; He must increase.

“... and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals...”

“...to wash them” is really what he’s talking about.

“... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

You go, “I wonder what he's talking about there.” The wonderful thing about this text and really in Scripture, if you'll just read on a little bit further, it'll actually explain what it means.

He goes on, and he says,

(Luke 3:17) “His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Now, to most of us, it's hard to imagine exactly what that is. I came upon an article that dealt with an individual that actually saw this process going on, and he writes about it, of one winnowing. Actually, what John is doing for us is he's given us a graphic picture, this imagery of sorts that

is analogous really to the work and the intent of Jesus. So, what is this work and intent of Jesus? What does He actually do? Because once again, in our own imagination, we're going, "I think I know what God's doing." And of course, Isaiah 55 would say, "What are the odds of that happening?" "His ways are higher than yours, as high as the heavens are above the earth; so are His ways greater than yours." So, what we have in the passage is an interesting picture of the whole process of winnowing. This particular article deals with one that is winnowing, and he's winnowing on the side of a hill, which is chosen for the purpose of having the benefit of the wind. Because when they throw it up in the air, the chaff blows away and the wheat falls to the ground. So, they usually choose on top of the hill to do this, and they begin winnowing.

The article goes like this, "Not far from the site of Ancient Corinth, where peasants in many of their customs approach near to the Oriental nations." In other words, the things they do, or the customs are like oriental nations, which by the way, the Jewish culture is oriental

just to let you know. He says, “So I passed a heap of grain which some laborers were employed in winnowing. They use for throwing up mingled wheat and chaff, a 3-pronged wooden fork having a handle 3 or 4 feet long. No doubt this was what was called the fan.”

See how the passage reads,

(Luke 3:17) “His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn...”

They actually used this fork; it was like a fan. Sometimes, it looked more like a shovel. Anyway, they're picking up. It says, “So, the fan was described; it would throw up against the breeze, the mingled wheat and the chaff which are naturally together. Then the light particles would be blown off to the side, while the grain would fall and remain on the threshing floor. When once the dry chaff was set on fire...” It wasn't just the end because some chaff wouldn't blow completely away. So, they would light the rest of it on fire and nothing the peasants could do could arrest the swift work of the devouring flame once it catches. It just burns so rapidly. It was an

unquenchable fire. It would be impossible to put out. It's an interesting picture of separation; of division; of taking things away that really, I would guess in some ways would be confusing or in some ways would cause harm. So, you see this interesting picture of what is described by John as the work of Christ.

You come to the Gospel of John, and as it starts off, it begins to talk about this One who created the earth, who created all things, and He comes to earth, and the world doesn't recognize Him. He comes into His own, His own didn't receive Him, but as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who would believe on His name. Then it begins to describe that those that would trust in Him were not born of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but this is a God thing. God has to move in this direction. So, John begins to describe the work of this One. What you see, if you've ever read through the Gospel of John is, you'll probably read and see the word "truth" defining Jesus probably more times than any other gospel. Jesus will even say, "I am the way the truth and the life. No man will come to

the Father, but through Me.” And he'll also be described in the Gospel of John as light. So, the light comes, and the darkness couldn't comprehend it. Go into a dark room. Real, real dark room, no light and then bring the light in. What happens to the dark? It's gone, and that's what happened when Christ came. But there is a division. It goes all the way back to the Old Testament. Why did God create the world the way that He did? Scripture says that He separated the light from the darkness. Why did He do that? I mean, God could have just gone, “This is the way it's going to be.” He wants you to know that's His work, and Christ is going to come and He's going to separate the light from darkness. That's why we oftentimes say, “Proclaim the gospel. If the person receives the gospel, they're wanting truth.” If they don't desire the gospel, I don't care how truthful they sound, they don't want truth because the gospel is the truth.

John 3 will say this probably more succinctly than I did, but he says if you're searching for the truth, you'll come to the light that your deeds may be evidence that's being wrought by God. So, what you have is this sense of

separation, a sense of taking out what would be called the chaff.

You don't need to turn there, but in Psalm 1 when you get down to verse 4; of course, the beginning parts is that those of us who meditate on the word of God day and night will be like a tree firmly planted by the water. We'll bring forth fruit in our season and whatever we do will prosper. Of course, he talks about the fact that we shouldn't be with sinners, we shouldn't be with scoffers, and he goes through that at the very beginning of this psalm.

By the time he comes to verse 4, he says this,

(Psalm 1:4) "The wicked are not so,
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away."

Now, the word that he uses in that passage is "*rûah*". It is a Hebrew word which is also translated "Spirit," and what a marvelous picture you have here, especially with the winnowing. He's given you a picture of the work of Christ through the Spirit and through fire and the separation of the chaff. I remember thinking, "Well, what's so bad about chaff? Why do you need to get rid of that stuff?"

Maybe you could make fossil fuels out of it or something.” But what's so bad about chaff? The answer to that is, it's really this black stuff that kind of grows with the wheat which is bacteria. It is not only bacteria, but its disease, and left to continue to be on the wheat, it will literally begin to take over. Strange and bizarre as it may seem; it probably doesn't seem that bizarre now that I've explained some of this, but the word “chaff” itself, “*mōṣ*,” is derived from a word, “*mûṣ*,” and “*mûṣ*” is actually a word that is described in the Old Testament as the “oppressor; the one who strangles or the one who holds back.” So, chaff infects and it diseases and it actually chokes out the plant's ability to produce. It literally takes advantage of that. So, the threshing of the wheat is getting the chaff out. The things that would squeeze out productivity and fruit are the very things that are taken out. As John responds to them, he goes, “The One that's coming after me, He's going to do a work, and He's going to do a work in your life.” One of the first ways that He's going to work is through the wind; the Spirit, “*pneuma*” in the Greek; “*ruach*” in the Hebrew.

“Pneuma” in the Greek is also translated “wind”. That's why in Acts 2, where you have the Pentecost, and the Spirit of God comes upon them, a mighty rushing wind; they began to hear the sound. Well, that's the picture of the Spirit of God moving and the Spirit of God moving is a picture of Him moving you to do something that you wouldn't normally do. I don't know if you've ever been in a real strong wind, but I've been in some that you hold your hand out, it moves you. It's so powerful it moves you. I'm thankful for the Spirit of God because Christ has sent Him to move me to do things that I wouldn't normally do. He begins to do a work and, in many cases, by virtue of even coming to the cross and receiving Christ as my Lord and Savior, and realizing that for my sins He died, the Spirit of God began to move of my life. Guess what happened? Chaff started leaving me. It was a remarkable event because I remember thinking, "Why don't I want to do those things anymore?" And all those things began to get to get blown, and it's the goodness of God that begins to convict your heart in a way that is refreshing. It's not something you go, “Well, what a horrible thing that I had to let go of my sin.” You were

excited about letting go because as we've oftentimes said, it's like the song, "The burdens of my heart rolled away." As Hebrews would actually say, sin so easily besets us, doesn't it? It just weighs us down. So, the Spirit of God begins to work.

The fact is that Christ said, "I'm going to send my Spirit, and He's going to bring you into all truth." And where does that begin? Well, we've often repeated the passage in 1 John 1, where it's our nature to say, "I'm not a sinner." He goes, "Ok, you're not being truthful." So, the evidence of the Spirit of God immediately begins to reveal sin in your life, and you begin to admit, "I'm the sinner." I mean, think of all those times where you go, "I think God's wrong." And now this day, you go, "You know what? I'm the one that's wrong. He's the One that's right" and God goes, "That's My Spirit telling you that." And you go, "That's it. I wouldn't have come up with that conclusion in a million years, but the Spirit of God begins to move." So, He begins to take all those things that would keep me from a relationship with Him, keep me from bearing fruit, or keep me from being productive, or

keep me from being diseased and distraught and depressed in so many ways.

Then the second thing that he puts in there is fire. Do you see the text? So, He's going to be coming with the Holy Spirit and fire. Really, as Jesus turns to His disciples, He says, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." That's an interesting statement. Then He goes, and He says, "Go and make disciples." Now, what He's saying in that passage is that "I control everything in your life because you're Mine."

So, we'll read passages like Romans 8, all things work together for good to those that love Him. Well, how could He work all things together for good if He doesn't control all things?

Colossians 1 is very clear about the fact that everything is made for Him and by Him and works through Him. So, He's in control of those things. That means that even the tribulation and the trials and the fires that you go through. That what God is doing is He's burning away that stuff that wouldn't blow away. Understand?

1 Peter 1, if you'll look there with me. It starts off and Peter is basically saying, much like what James says in James 1, "Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials. It's a good thing." Of course, we think it's a bad thing, but he goes, "No, it's a good gift. Every good and perfect gift comes from above." It's in the context of trials, by the way. So, what he's saying is that the trials are a gift from God. Why has God blessed me so much? And the reason He's blessed you so much is because He doesn't want that chaff getting a hold of you.

I know that the people in LA in that particular area probably wonder, "Why did He let my house burn?" Maybe you loved that house too much. I'm not saying everybody did, but I'm just saying, you need to let go of these things that would so easily beset you. Sometimes, you love these things more than you love God. Maybe this is a time when you start loving Him. It'll save your life forever.

But 1 Peter reads this way, if you drop on down, that God has given us a heritage which is imperishable, and it's protected by the power of God. I like that phrase.

(1 Peter 1:6) “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.”

Now, watch how he describes “various trials”.

(1 Peter 1:7) “So that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

(1 Peter 1:8) and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

(1 Peter 1:9) obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”

What is God doing? He's saving you. He's saving you from all those things. Not just from hell, but He's saving you from all those things that would so easily beset you; that would bring depression; that would bring heartache; that would rob you of joy. Sometimes, you're not always listening to the Spirit. I know that may come as a shock to

you. He really continues with this theme, and the thought is, "I'm a believer. Why should I go through difficulty?" And God goes, "Because you're My kid, and I'm not going to let these things continue in your life. I love you too much." Hebrews is very clear, "Who the Lord loves, He disciplines, and He scourges every child. If you're without discipline, you're not His child." So, the very fact that certain things are happening, it's causing you to wake up. So, it reads this way in 1 Peter 4,

(1 Petr 4:12) "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

(1 Peter 4:13) but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

(1 Peter 4:14) If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

(1 Peter 4:15) Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler.”

I've seen people do the wrong thing, “I got arrested. Oh, well. I'm suffering for Jesus.” You're not suffering for Jesus. You're suffering because you robbed the bank.

(1 Peter 4:16) “but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.”

Watch verse 17. It's a very interesting verse. If you don't have it underlined in your Bible, it might be a good one to remember.

(1 Peter 4:17) “For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God...”

You look all around and you see all these wicked people and they are getting away with murder. Why is that? They're not His. But you can't seem to get away with anything. You're His.

“For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”

So, it's a very clear verse that let's us know that Christ who controls all things is working in our life through the difficult circumstances in every believer. If you ever wonder, "Why is He doing this?" He's getting chaff out.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and we ask You to work within our hearts. Lord, we give You thanks for Your power. Lord, forgive us of our imagination that oftentimes takes us in places which are just not correct; brings us to erroneous conclusions. But Your word begins to reveal to us just exactly what You are doing, and how You are really preparing not only a place for us, but you are preparing us for that place. So, Lord, even today, we want to give You thanks for the hard times in our life and thank You for opening our eyes that we might see them for what they are. We are truly Your children if in fact You discipline us, and it is an act of love that is being demonstrating to us.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed. If you have not received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, one of the saddest verses in all of Scripture is found in Romans 1, where God gave them over to their choices, to their sins. That's the worst thing that could ever happen, that you get what you want. But the God, who loves you will come into your life; He'll protect you. He'll begin to breathe His Spirit within you, and you begin to say, "That's not right. That's not right." And you'll see the right way and you'll follow that. You'll begin to desire to pattern your life after Christ. You'll become imitators of Him and walk in love, just as Christ. But there are things that will happen in your life that just continue to stick, but God is gracious enough to burn them away too. Give Him thanks for that. See your walk as this wonderful, gracious gift that God has given you. Every day is a day He cries out, "I love you." We're asking you to believe that, and if you've never believed that, we're asking you to receive that.