

It Depends...

A while back, I visited a site that offered creative thinking puzzles. One of them was called "The Drop the Block Problem." It showed a stick figured man holding a block of wood and it asked the question, "What will happen to the piece of wood when the person lets go of it?"

Think about that for a second...

The answer is that it all depends on where that person is standing when he drops the piece of wood. The environment will dictate where the wood goes. If the person is on earth, the wood falls down to the ground. If the person is under water, the wood will float up. And if the person happens to be in space, the block of wood will not move at all. There are no forces pushing it in any direction.

Context is everything. And so it is with principles in the Bible. You and I need to be careful students of God's word. Context needs to be checked and terms need to be defined.

Take for example the statement in Psalm 34: "The righteous cry out and the Lord hears them, he delivers them from all their troubles." Does that mean God's kids will never have any troubles? No heartaches? No pain? No losses? No struggles with sin?

But it depends... it depends on a whole rash of things. With a little spiritual effort and study, it will become clear that it does not mean that no discomfort will ever befall God's kids. Instead, it means, "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed. We are perplexed, but not in despair. We are persecuted, but not abandoned. We are struck down, but not destroyed." (II Cor. 4:8-9)

When we assert that believers will escape all harm, we set ourselves up for incredible disappointment. We will not escape heartache. It just isn't so. We need to be very careful to check the entire context of a Biblical principle and apply it carefully. The application may depend upon a number of factors.

Recently I saw an advertisement for a ministry in my area that declared that it was a church for awesome people. And it invited other awesome folks to come join them. I struggled some with the verbiage. I felt like they needed to define their terms and be careful about the context of things.

In Christ, I am awesome! In and of myself, I am the "chief of sinners." In Christ, I have an amazingly awesome future. Left to my own desires, I will mess it all up. In Christ, my friends and I can have awesome fellowship. Without Him we are wandering souls.

So this week, let's be diligent to check the context of our spiritual advice. Let's be careful to note the setting of a Biblical truth. Let's make sure we notice the details and clarify what it all depends on.