



GIVE THANKS IN TOUGH TIMES

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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Give Thanks in Tough Times

SERMON REFERENCE: Ephesians 5:20

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2321

Perhaps the most difficult thing we'll ever do is give thanks in tough times. It requires true maturity in the faith to see that God is good, even when things are not good.

Ephesians 5:20 instructs us, "...giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Our ability to choose thankfulness in times of trouble will reap maturity like never before. There are seven ways that trouble may minister to us.

First, trouble may bring correction.

Hebrews 12:6 says, "For whom the Lord loves He chastens..." God cares for us, so if our trouble is caused by our sin, He will lovingly correct us as a parent corrects their child.

Second, trouble may deepen our dependency on Christ.

Heartaches crowd us toward Jesus and cause us to depend on Him, who is our greatest strength.

Third, trouble may confirm our testimony to others.

It may be through deep sorrow and pain that, knowing and praising God, we become great witnesses. The God of all comfort promises to comfort us in tribulation; once we've experienced it, we can show that comfort to others.

Trouble can also increase our maturity.

God's plan for His children is to mature in their faith and become more like Jesus Christ.

Adrian Rogers says, "God had only one son without sin, but He's never had a son without suffering."

When we endure trials fashioned by the devil and engineered by wicked people, we can thank God that He is using them to make us more like Jesus.

Trouble can bring excelling glory.

Faith that can't be tested can't be trusted. We can be thankful that the fiery trials bring the Spirit of glory upon us.

Trouble can also bring baffling mystery. As exemplified in Scripture, sometimes troubles don't make sense. We don't live by explanations, but by God's promises. We must obey Him.

Finally, trouble will bring eternal victory. Romans 8 reminds us that current suffering doesn't compare to future glory. There is victory in Jesus Christ; if we hold onto this promise in our troubles, we can be thankful for those troubles

Life Application

Are you facing tough times today? Give thanks to God, who is good even when things are not good.



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) Perhaps the most difficult thing is to give God thanks in difficult, hard times.
- b) Ephesians 5:20 instructs us to give thanks always, for all things.
- c) There are four levels of life.
 - i) The lowest level – people constantly grumbling and complaining.
 - ii) People who don't grumble, but nor do they thank God or others for the many magnificent blessings they have.
 - iii) Those who thank God for the obvious blessings of life – food, health, friends, family, joy, victory, church, the Bible; all the good things that God has given to us.
 - iv) The highest level - people who thank God for all things, no matter what.
 - (1) All things are not good.
 - (2) Things may not be good, but God is good.
 - (3) James 1:17
- d) There is evil in the world.
 - i) God is not the author of evil.
 - ii) 1 John 5:19
 - iii) The devil is the author of all evil.
- e) Why does God allow evil?
 - i) Many philosophers will try to claim that since God created all things, and evil is something, then God must have created evil.
 - (1) This is faulty syllogism.
 - ii) God did make all things, but He made all things perfect.
 - (1) When God made man, God gave man perfect freedom.
 - (a) This means man can choose to do either good or evil.
 - (b) God allows man to choose evil, so that he may also have the ability to choose good.
 - (2) Without a choice, man cannot choose anything.
 - (a) Man could not choose to love God.
 - (3) We must have a choice between good and evil in order to choose good.
 - (4) We must have a choice between love and hate in order to choose love.
 - (a) Forced love is not love at all.
 - (5) God had to give man a choice and so the ability to choose is man's greatest blessing and man's greatest danger.
 - iii) Why doesn't God simply wipe out evil?
 - (1) If God were to obliterate evil, He would take away choice.
 - (2) The highest good is to love God with all our heart, soul and mind.
 - (3) To destroy evil would also destroy this choice for our highest good.
 - (4) Destroying evil would be an act of evil.
 - (5) God loves us and wants us to love Him, so He gave us a choice.



iv) But what about those people who choose good, and still experience heartbreak? What about godly people who experience sorrow and crushing circumstances?

(l) It is alright to ask questions. God has nothing to hide, for His ways are perfect.

(a) Psalm 18:30

f) Romans 8:28 reveals that there is a rainbow of hope over all our sorrows.

i) God is the sovereign God, who takes all things, good or bad, indifferent of whatever, and He puts them in the crucible of His love and causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him.

g) There are seven ways that trouble may minister to us as children of God, so that we may find hope in the midst of heartache, pain and deprivation, and be able to give thanks always for all things.

2) TROUBLE MAY BRING A CORRECTING MINISTRY

a) Hebrews 12:6

b) Hebrews 12:11

i) God chastens those whom He loves.

c) A parent disciplines because he loves his child.

i) God loves us enough to patiently and lovingly correct us.

d) David, Israel's greatest king, wrote about the times God chastised Him when He wandered away.

i) Psalm 119:67

e) It may not feel like a joyous thing to be chastened by God in the moment, but if it is correcting that we need, we can thank God that He loves us and cares to chastise us.

i) Hebrews 12:11

3) TROUBLE MAY BRING A DEEPENING DEPENDENCY

a) The apostle Paul, a highly gifted man, whom God lavished with much grace, intellect and influence, faced the temptation to get away from God and depend upon himself.

b) Troubles crowd us to Jesus; they hedge us in and bring us to Jesus so that we might depend more upon Him.

i) Difficulty and heartache has a way of bringing deep dependency upon God.

c) Paul was caught up into Heaven in a vision.

i) 2 Corinthians 12:7

ii) As a result, Paul received a "thorn in his flesh," or a stake to the heart, which Paul prayed God would take away, but He would not.

(l) Instead, Paul learned to thank God for his weakness, because it revealed God's sufficient grace.

d) Our greatest strength is not our intellect, money or personality; it is God.

i) If we live lives without difficulties, we'll never grasp that.

e) Oswald Chambers: "An unguarded strength is a double weakness."

f) When we begin to depend upon ourselves, blessings can become a curse unless God allows us to have some trouble that brings us to a dependency upon Him.

i) Proverbs 16:18

**4) TROUBLE MAY BRING A CONFIRMING TESTIMONY**

- a) Troubles in our lives may help us have a greater testimony than before we experienced them.
 - i) It may be through deep sorrow and pain that knowing and praising God gives us the greatest testimony.
- b) 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
 - i) God is the source of comfort.
 - (1) If we didn't have tribulation, we wouldn't need comfort.
 - ii) We are able to comfort others with the same comfort which we've received from the Lord in our deep sorrows.
- c) Philippians 1:12
 - i) Paul expresses that in his imprisonment, suffering and pain, he is able to see that that what happens to him is happening for the furtherance the Gospel.
- d) If pain can cause you to have a stronger testimony, if it can become a platform for the grace of God, if it can be the black velvet on which the diamond of God's grace is displayed, can you not thank Him for it?

5) TROUBLE MAY BRING AN INCREASING MATURITY

- a) God's plan is for us to mature.
 - i) Romans 8:28-29
 - ii) It is not to make us healthy, wealthy, happy or influential; it is to make us more like Jesus Christ.
- b) God had only one son without sin, but He's never had a Son without suffering.
- c) God uses sorrow to move us toward maturity and we learn patience.
 - i) James 1:4
 - (1) "Perfect" in this passage means "mature."
 - (2) "Perfect" in this passage does not mean "sinless."
 - (a) Hebrews 2:10
 - (i) This does not mean that Jesus, the Captain of our faith, was 'made' sinless – He never did sin.
 - (3) "Patience" in this passage comes from the Greek word which means "endurance."
 - ii) We will not learn true maturity until we learn patience
 - (1) And the only way we can learn patience, in order to have maturity, is to have something to endure.
 - (2) We learn endurance by simply enduring.
 - d) If God is building maturity and Christ-likeness into you, even if they are things caused by the devil and evil people; can we not thank God? Yes, we can.

6) TROUBLE MAY BRING EXCELLING GLORY

- a) 1 Peter 4:12-14
 - i) "Try" in this passage means "to test."
 - ii) "The faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted."
 - iii) Most people, when they get into trouble, ask, "Why me, Lord?"
 - (1) But these things are not strange, they happen to other people.
- b) Many of us want the Spirit of glory and God to rest upon us; but we must understand that He does so through fiery trials.



- c) Stephen, the first martyr, shined like the face of an angel.
 - i) Acts 6:15
- d) In Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace and were joined by a fourth Man, the Son of God Himself; the Spirit of glory was there with them.

7) TROUBLE MAY BRING BAFFLING MYSTERY

- a) There are some things we cannot understand, because God's thoughts are higher than ours.
 - i) Isaiah 55:8-9
 - ii) Deuteronomy 29:29
 - (1) God will give us enough to know to obey Him.
 - iii) Warren Wiersbe: "We live by promises, not by explanations."
 - iv) 2 Corinthians 5:7
 - v) We can go through the deepest anguish one could experience, and it will not make sense to us.
 - (1) This is what happened to Job.
 - (2) Job demanded answers from God concerning his troubles.
 - (3) However, even when he questioned why God allowed his suffering, he still trusted Him.
 - (a) Job 13:15

8) TROUBLE WILL BRING ETERNAL VICTORY

- a) Romans 8:18
 - i) It's not over yet.
 - ii) Our present suffering does not compare to the future glory.
- b) What a day that will be, at the midnight cry, when:
 - i) He turns every hurt to a hallelujah.
 - ii) He turns every tear to a pearl.
 - iii) He turns every Calvary to an Easter.
 - iv) Then we understand that He has not forsaken us, that He loves us, that He is will us and that there is indeed victory in Jesus.

9) CONCLUSION

- a) If all of these things are true (which they are), can we not in everything give thanks?
- b) Give thanks always for all things, even in tough times.
- c) Jesus is our unspeakable gift. He is enough to be thankful.
 - i) 2 Corinthians 9:15
- d) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- e) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



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Would you find Ephesians chapter 5, we're talking on this subject, "Giving Thanks in Tough Times." Now what is the hardest thing to do? Is the hardest thing to do to try to climb a fence that's leaning toward you? Well, harder than that is to kiss a girl leaning away from you. But perhaps the most difficult thing is to give God thanks in difficult times, in hard times. Look at our scripture, Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20, here is a command, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, if it simply said, "Giving thanks always," we could do that. Or if it said, "Giving thanks always for some things," we could do that, but that isn't what it says. It says, "Giving thanks always for all things." Now is that possible? Shouldn't we do that, can we do that?

May I suggest to you there are four levels of life? First of all, there is the lowest level of life, those people who are constantly grumbling and complaining, ever been around people like that? Constantly grumbling and complaining. They ought to lock those people up in a room and just let them grumble and complain one to another.

Now the next level of life, is not much higher than that, these are people who don't grumble, but nor do they thank. They just go through life and never once thank God or thank others for the many, many magnificent blessings that we have.

Now up a notch higher than that are those who do thank God but they thank God for the obvious blessings of life: for food, for health, for friends, for family, for joy, for victory, for the church, for the Bible, for all of the good things that God has given to us. Well that's wonderful, but that's still not the highest level.

The highest level are those who thank God for all things no matter what at all times. "Well, Pastor, are you trying to tell me that all things are good and therefore I ought to thank God for all things?" No, friend, all things are not good and for me to pretend that all things are good would mock God and us. Murder is not good, rape is not good, cancer is not good, heartache is not good, divorce is not good, abandoned children is not good. No! These things are not good. So how can we thank God for these kind of things? Well, let me say this. Things may not be good, but listen to me carefully, God is good. God is good. James 1 verse 17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of light."

Now, there's evil in the world and I want you to understand this very clearly. When I say we're to give thanks for all things, don't get the idea that God is the author of evil and therefore we should thank God for that. God is not, I say, God is not the author of evil. First John chapter 5 and verse 19 says, "The whole world lies in wickedness." It literally means in the lap of wickedness, like a baby would lie in its mother's lap, in the cradle of wickedness. And God is not doing that, the wicked one, the devil is the author of that kind of evil.

Well that brings up a good question. Why does God allow evil? If you go to college, in your philosophy class they'll give you a little syllogism like this. God, so say Christians, made all things. Evil is something, so God created evil. That's the little syllogism. And they say since before God there was nothing, all things have come from God, evil is a thing, therefore God is the author of evil. That's a faulty syllogism. Let me tell you what the truth of the matter is. God did make all things, but God made all things perfect. And when God made man, God gave man perfect freedom. Now when God gave man perfect freedom, that means he can choose to do both good or evil, either one.



Now, why did God allow man to be able to choose evil? That he might have the ability to choose good. Had there been no choice, he could not have chosen anything, he could not have chosen to love God and so you must have a choice between good and evil in order to choose good. You must have a choice between love and hate in order to choose love. Forced love is not love at all. God had to give man a choice and so the ability to choose is man's greatest blessing and man's greatest danger. But God made Adam and Eve, a pair in the garden, absolutely perfect. God is not the author of evil, God is the author of perfection.

Well, somebody says, "But yes, but He's all powerful and since there's evil here, why doesn't God just obliterate it? Why doesn't God just wipe it out?" Because if God were to obliterate evil, just to step in and wipe it out, then again He would take away the choice. There would be no choice. And what is the highest good is to love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind, that's the highest good. So, if God were to destroy evil that would take away the ability for the highest good and therefore even to destroy evil would be an act of evil. No, God loves us enough and wants to love us even more or wants us to love Him even more. And so God gives this choice.

Well, you say, "Alright, Adrian, so far, so good. But now what about those people who don't choose evil? What about people who choose good? What about people who love God? What about people who serve God and their hearts are broken, their lives are crushed and there's sorrow and heartache and fear and pain and pang and moan and groan and woe? People who love God, how about evil in their heart and in their lives? How can we say to God-fearing people, 'Giving thanks always to all things in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?'" Well, it's a good question. May I say, it's alright to ask questions! It's good to ask questions, but it is not all right to question the goodness of God. As for God, the Bible says, "His way is perfect."

Now what I want to show you from the Bible is how to take and arch the rainbow of hope over all of your sorrows. That rainbow of hope is Romans 8:28, which says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose." It does not say all things are good. All things are not good, we've already settled that, and God is not the author of evil, He is not! But God is the sovereign God and God is good and God takes all things, good or bad, indifferent or whatever, and God puts these in the crucible of His love and God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him.

Now I want to give you seven things that trouble may do to you and for you. Seven ways that trouble may minister to you as a child of God so that you can say, "Thank You, Lord, thank You in the midst of my heartache, thank You in the midst of my pain, thank You in the midst of my deprivation, thank You, Lord, in the midst of a broken home, thank You, Lord, as I stand beside the grave of the dearest on Earth to me. Thank You, Lord." "Giving thanks always for all things."

Reason number one, **trouble may bring a correcting ministry.** Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 6, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Hebrews 12 verse 11, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby. Whom the Father loves, He chastens." How many of you ever had a dad to take you to the woodshed, as it were, and apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge and say something like this to you, "I do this because I love you." Did you ever have a parent like that, let me see your hand. Most of us. "I do this because I love you." I've often said when my dad would say that to me, I would say, then I must be your favorite son. I do this because I love you. Now why do our parents do that? Because, not that they don't love us, but because they do love us. God loves us enough to patiently and lovingly correct us.



David, the sweet singer of Israel, Israel's greatest king, wrote in the Psalms these words in Psalm 119 verse 67, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray," and I think there are some of us who've gone astray and God has had to chastise us and when we look back we say, "You know, no chastening for the present time seem to be joyous but grievous." I mean, not a one of us ever said, "Now you know, this is the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me, my dad is giving me a licking, thank You, Lord, this is just wonderful, how I praise You, God. Thank you, dad, I really needed this, father." No, most of us never did that, but most of us who had parents who cared enough to chastise us by whatever means, when we grew up looked back and said, "Thank you, thank you that I had a father, thank you that I had a mother who loved me enough." "For whom the Lord loves, He chastens." So, number one, trouble may bring a correcting ministry and if it brings a correcting ministry, shouldn't we thank God, should we not thank God? Nod your head, yes.

All right, number two: **trouble may bring a deepening dependency.** It may bring a deepening dependency. Now, the apostle Paul was a highly gifted man. He was a man unto whom God had poured much grace, but not only much grace, much intellect and much influence. And Paul had a temptation to get away from God and to depend upon himself. Years and years ago I read a book by L. E. Maxwell. The title of the book was this, *Crowded to Christ*. That is, troubles crowd us to Jesus, they hedge us in and they bring us to Jesus so that we might depend more upon Him. And it is the difficulty and the heartaches that bring this deep dependency upon God.

Now the apostle Paul had a vision. God so blessed Paul that he was caught up into the third Heaven. He saw sacred secrets, he saw things there that are not even lawful for a man to utter. God pulled back the veil and Paul just went to Heaven. He said in Second Corinthians 12:3, "I don't know whether I was going in the spirit or whether my literal body went to Heaven," which tells me something right there, that your literal body can go to Heaven. We're going to be there in Heaven in a literal body one of these days, in a resurrected body. He said, "I don't know."

But then he said this, and look at the Scripture, Second Corinthians chapter 12 verses 7 through 9, and he says, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh." And the word thorn in the flesh literally means, not a thorn like a rose thorn, but a stake. He was impaled upon a stake. "The messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me." That doesn't mean, "Take it away, take it away, take it away." He had three long extended times of prayer, I believe, "that it might depart from me. And He," God, "said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Then Paul said, 'Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities.'" That is, I will thank God, I will thank God for a stake in my heart, in my body. "I will glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong."

What is your greatest strength? Your intellect, your money, your personality? No, your greatest strength is God. But you see, when we sail through life without any difficulties, we tend not to depend upon God. Oswald Chambers said, "An unguarded strength is a double weakness." When we begin to depend upon ourselves, But difficulty and heartache and pain cause us to depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

God called me to the ministry as a youngster. This is the only thing I've ever done. I've been a pastor since I was nineteen years of age, but headed toward the ministry when I was in high school because God laid His hand upon me and I wanted God to use me. And I can remember going out and walking up and down at nighttime, lifting my heart and hands to God and saying, "Oh, God, I want You to use me, I want You to anoint my life." I can remember praying, as I've told you before, lying prostrate on the



ground with my face down and saying, “Oh, God, take control of my life, I want You to use me.” And I would be disingenuous and less than honest if I did not tell you that God blessed and that God anointed my life far beyond my own personal ability. I know that, I know that beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure that the hand of God came upon me.

Then I went to college, began to study theology. Then I went beyond college to seminary and continued to study theology and I got more and more proficient. I didn’t understand all of the theology, but I had a vital experience with God. But then I began to learn more and more about it and, very frankly, I began to get more and more self-sufficient and somewhat argumentative and somewhat combative with others who did not quite agree with the theology that I held. Now, at that time, you would never have convinced me that I was depending upon myself, because from outward appearances, God was blessing the ministry. I compared myself to others, which is always a dangerous thing to do, I could perhaps say, “Well, I’m doing all right.”

Then as you know, shortly after Joyce and I left seminary and went to Florida to pastor a church, we had a child to die. A precious baby named Phillip, one of those sudden infant deaths, where little babies die. They’re still trying to figure out exactly why. And our hearts were crushed. We did the only thing we knew to do and that was to turn to God and look to God anew and afresh and just simply say, “Oh, God, we need You, we want You, here we are, Lord, anything we have, everything we have, Lord, it belongs to You.” And I can tell you that God anointed me with fresh oil in a way that perhaps I would not have been anointed had we not gone through that excruciating experience. I never want to go through another one like that, but I would not take anything for what we learned.

You know, as you depend upon yourself, sometimes through the abundance of God’s goodness, those blessings can become a curse unless God allows us to have some trouble that brings us to a dependency, a dependency upon Him. Proverbs 16:18, “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Now, if your trouble, if your heartache, if your tears, if your difficulty, if your pain, if your anguish, if it causes you to depend more upon God, can’t you thank Him for it? You just say, Lord, “I just have to thank You, Lord, because this has caused me a dependency.”

Number three, **trouble may bring a confirming testimony.** Did you know that trouble in your life may help you to have a greater testimony than if you never had any trouble? It may be through deep sorrow and deep pain that knowing God and praising God gives you the greatest testimony. Let me give you a Scripture. The apostle Paul, who knew much sorrow, said this. Second Corinthians chapter 1 verses 3 and 4, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort,” I love that, “the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” Now what does that verse tell us? It tells us that God is the source of comfort. It tells us also that God comforts us in tribulation. If you didn’t have tribulation, you wouldn’t need comfort. And then it says that God comforts us in all, a double I, of our tribulation. And then it says that God takes that comfort that He gives us and allows us to comfort others with that same comfort which we have received of the Lord.

I mentioned just a few moments ago about the experience Joyce and I had, the loss of a child, and I’ve seen mothers, not just once, but many times, come to Joyce and receive comfort when they themselves had lost a child. And I have seen Joyce, not in a theoretical way, but in a very real way, share the comfort that she has received of the Lord and that I have received with others. And we’re able to comfort others with the same comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. You see, folks, don’t get the idea that if we just sail through life with no difficulties that it’s going to make us a better witness. No, that’s not so.



The apostle Paul, and we're referred to him several times, he learned this lesson when he was in prison, here's a key verse I want you to jot it down. Philippians 1 verse 12. Now here's Paul in a rancid, dark, deep, dank, miserable prison, perhaps waiting to be executed, and here's what he said, Philippians 1 verse 12, "But I would that ye should understand, brethren, that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel." I'm in prison, I'm in prison and my imprisonment, my suffering, my pain, my toil, my deprivation has fallen out to the furtherance of the Gospel. Paul said, "I'm in prison! But I want you to know that the things that have happened to me have happened for the furtherance of the Gospel."

Now, if you can praise God in trouble and heartache and pain and tears and sorrow and deprivation and shut the devil's mouth, the devil says, "Well, the only reason they serve You is because they've never had any trouble." Say, "No, you don't know My servant, Job. No, he loves Me, not because of what I've done for him, but because of who I AM." You see, friend, if trouble, if heartache, if pain can cause you to have a stronger testimony, if it can become a platform for the grace of God, if it can be the black velvet on which the diamond of God's grace is displayed, can you not thank Him for it? Yes, you can.

Number four, **trouble may bring an increasing maturity.** Now, what is God's plan for you? Well, God wants you to be mature. You say, "Well, God's plan for me is health and wealth." Sorry about that. Well, you say, "Then God's plan for me is service and usefulness." Well, He wants that, but that's not God's plan for you. What is God's plan for you? The Bible tells us in Romans 8 verses 28 and 29, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God," all right; we've already talked about that. "To them which are called according to His purpose." Okay, what is His purpose? "For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." God's plan for you is not to make you healthy, wealthy, happy, or even influential. God's plan for you, for me is to make me like the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ-likeness.

Now, God had a Son without sin, but he's never had a Son without suffering. Somebody wrote these little words we often quote, "I walked a mile with pleasure, she chatted all the way but left me none the wiser for all she had to say. I walked a mile with sorrow, not a word said she. But oh, the things I learned from sorrow when sorrow walked with me." God seems to take sorrow and massage our hearts. And you know, one of the things that we learned when we're going through difficulty that moves us toward maturity? We learn patience.

James 1 verse 4, jot it down. "But let patience have her perfect work," the word perfect there means mature, "that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." The word there perfect does not mean sinless. The Bible says in Hebrews 2:10, "The captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering," the captain of our faith, Jesus. Doesn't mean He was made sinless, He never did sin. The word perfect means mature, like you look at a rose and you say, "That's a perfect rose." A rose with the dew drops on it in full bloom. God wants you to come to maturity and the Bible says in James 1:4, listen to this, "Let patience have her perfect work that you may be mature." Now the word patience here is not the ability to thread a needle or build a model airplane, it's literally a Greek word that means endurance. Now you'll never learn anything if you don't learn patience. You won't learn the piano till you learn the scales. You're not going to learn Greek until you have enough patience to learn the verbs and, friend, you're not going to learn to be a true child of God in true maturity until you learn patience. And so the only way that you can learn endurance or patience in order to have maturity is to have something to endure. Now, if you don't have anything to endure, how on earth are you going to learn endurance? You don't sharpen an axe on a pound of butter. So, if God is building maturity into you, if God is building Christ-likeness into you, even if these are things that are caused by the devil, even if these are things that wicked people have engineered, even then, can you not thank God? Yes you can, indeed.



Now number five, **trouble may bring excelling glory.** First Peter chapter 4 verses 12 through 14, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you?" That word try you is to test you. A wise man said, "The faith that can't be tested can't be trusted." "The fiery trial, which is to test you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." Don't most of us, when we get into trouble, say, "Why me, Lord? Why? Why did this strange thing happen?" You says, "It's not strange, as though some strange thing happened unto you. "But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye," now watch this, "for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. On their part is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified."

How many of you would like the Spirit of glory and God to rest on you, let me see your hand? Say, "Oh, God, I want the Spirit of glory and God to rest upon me." Now I'm not going to ask the second question, "How many of you want a fiery trial?" "I don't want any fiery trial, no!" But he says, listen, it's the fiery trial that, that brings the Spirit of glory upon us and I want the glory of God to be upon me.

Stephen, I have a son named Stephen, my eldest son, named after the preaching deacon in the New Testament who was stoned for the testimony of Jesus Christ, but while he was being stoned, in Acts 6:15 the Bible says that his face shined like the face of an angel. The Spirit of glory and of God was upon him. And in Daniel chapter 3 verses 24 and 25, when those three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were in the fiery furnace and the old king looked in there and said, "We only threw three dudes in there. I see four, and the fourth is like the Son of God." The Spirit of glory was there with them. Now, if your trouble, your heartache, your pain causes you to know this glory, and for God's glory, can you not thank God for it?

Number six; **trouble may bring baffling mystery.** You saying, "Adrian, you've not mentioned what God's doing in my heart and in my life. I mean, all of those things may be good, but they just don't fit my case." Well, here's one that will. There's some things you'll never know. There's some things that some preachers may never be able to explain to you. Why? Well very clearly, Isaiah 55 verses 8 and 9, God says, "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,' saith the Lord. 'Ffor as the Heavens are higher than the Earth,'" how far is up, friend? You tell me. "'So are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.'" Now don't come to me and say, "Now, Pastor, why?" Because there are some why's that I cannot answer.

Let me give you another verse. Deuteronomy 29 verse 29, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." God will give you enough to know to obey Him. Warren Wiersbe said, "We live by promises, not by explanations." And again the Bible says in Second Corinthians 5:7, "We walk by faith and not by sight." You can go through the deepest anguish, you can look into the pit, you can look into the abyss and nothing will make sense to you. Is that not what happens in Job? My sermon would not have satisfied Job, I can tell you, because Job said, "Yep, yep, yep, but that doesn't explain it. Yep, yep, yep, yep, yep, but." And Job said to God, "I wish I could bring You into court, I wish there were a lawyer, I wish there were somebody who could argue our case! God, I don't understand! God, You owe me some answers!" His wife said in Job 2 verses 9 and 10, "Why don't you just curse God and die?" He said, "Woman, are you crazy? Are you crazy? You think I'm going to deny Him?" Job 13:15, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him, yet will I trust Him." Friend, there's some things we may not understand and we don't have to understand them to thank God, because God is good. All things are not good, but God is good.

Then number seven, **trouble will bring eternal victory.** Romans 8:18 says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us."



Friend, it's not over yet. Now notice what he's saying. He's saying that the sufferings of this present time, you just fill in your suffering right now. He says, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory." Now he's not saying over here are the sufferings and they're very bad, but over here is the glory and the glory is very good. He's not saying that therefore the glory offsets the sufferings. He's not saying that this is just as good as that is bad. No, he says, precious friend, that, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory." Do you see what he's saying? He's not saying one offsets the other, he's saying there's no comparison.

What a day that will be, at the midnight cry. What a day that will be, when He turns every hurt to a hallelujah, He turns every tear to a pearl, He turns every Calvary to an Easter, and then we understand that He has not forsaken us, that He loves us, that He's with us. And there is indeed victory in Jesus, do you understand that? Friend, there is victory in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now if all of these things are true, and every one is and far more, then can we not in everything give thanks? Giving thanks always for all things, giving thanks even in tough times, alright? Now the Bible says, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift," and who is that? Jesus.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? And I want you to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. I want you to be saved. I don't want you to die and go to Hell when Jesus died for you and you can be saved today. Would you say, "Oh, God, I'm a sinner and I'm lost and my good deeds can't save me. I need You, I need You, Lord. Jesus, You died to save me and You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You. Right now I receive You, Lord Jesus, now this moment, now, right now I open my heart, I receive You, Jesus. Come into my heart, come in right now, forgive my sin, cleanse me, take control of my life, save me, Lord Jesus."

Did you ask Him? Were you sincere? Then pray this way, "Thank You for doing it, Lord Jesus. I receive it by faith, I don't ask for a feeling, I don't look for a sign, I stand on Your Word, I receive it by faith. You're now my Lord, my Savior, and my God, and I will live for You because You died for me. And give me the courage now today to make it public. Help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray, Amen.



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