**SERMON OUTLINE**

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| **SERMON TITLE:** | Give Thanks in Tough Times |
| **SERMON REFERENCE:** | Ephesians 5:20 |
| **LWF SERMON NUMBER:** | #2321 |
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1. INTRODUCTION
   1. Perhaps the most difficult thing is to give God thanks in difficult, hard times.
   2. Ephesians 5:20 instructs us to give thanksalways, for allthings.
   3. There are four levels of life.
      1. The lowest level – people constantly grumbling and complaining.
      2. People who don’t grumble, but nor do they thank God or others for the many magnificent blessings they have.
      3. 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.
      4. 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
   4. There is evil in the world.
      1. God is not the author of evil.
      2. 1 John 5:19
      3. The devil is the author of all evil.
   5. Why does God allow evil?
      1. 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.
      2. God did make all things, but He made all things perfect.
         1. When God made man, God gave man perfect freedom.
            1. This means man can choose to do either good or evil.
            2. 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.
            1. 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.
            1. 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.
      3. 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.
      4. But what about those people who choose good, and still experience heartbreak? What about godly people who experience sorrow and crushing circumstances?
         1. It is alright to ask questions. God has nothing to hide, for His ways are perfect.
            1. Psalm 18:30
   6. Romans 8:28 reveals that there is a rainbow of hope over all our sorrows.
      1. 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.
   7. 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
   1. Hebrews 12:6
   2. Hebrews 12:11
      1. God chastens those whom He loves.
   3. A parent disciplines because he loves his child.
      1. God loves us enough to patiently and lovingly correct us.
   4. David, Israel’s greatest king, wrote about the times God chastised Him when He wandered away.
      1. Psalm 119:67
   5. 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.
      1. Hebrews 12:11
3. TROUBLE MAY BRING A DEEPENING DEPENDENCY
   1. 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.
   2. Troubles crowd us to Jesus; they hedge us in and bring us to Jesus so that we might depend more upon Him.
      1. Difficulty and heartache has a way of bringing deep dependency upon God.
   3. Paul was caught up into Heaven in a vision.
      1. 2 Corinthians 12:7
      2. 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.
         1. Instead, Paul learned to thank God for his weakness, because it revealed God’s sufficient grace.
   4. Our greatest strength is not our intellect, money or personality; it is God.
      1. If we live lives without difficulties, we’ll never grasp that.
   5. Oswald Chambers: “An unguarded strength is a double weakness.”
   6. 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.
      1. Proverbs 16:18
4. Trouble may bring a confirming testimony
   1. Troubles in our lives may help us have a greater testimony than before we experienced them.
      1. It may be through deep sorrow and pain that knowing and praising God gives us the greatest testimony.
   2. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
      1. God is the source of comfort.
         1. If we didn’t have tribulation, we wouldn’t need comfort.
      2. We are able to comfort others with the same comfort which we’ve received from the Lord in our deep sorrows.
   3. Philippians 1:12
      1. 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.
   4. 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
   1. God’s plan is for us to mature.
      1. Romans 8:28-29
      2. It is not to make us healthy, wealthy, happy or influential; it is to make us more like Jesus Christ.
   2. God had only one son without sin, but He’s never had a Son without suffering.
   3. God uses sorrow to move us toward maturity and we learn patience.
      1. James 1:4
         1. “Perfect” in this passage means “mature.”
         2. “Perfect” in this passage does not mean “sinless.”
            1. Hebrews 2:10

This does not mean that Jesus, the Captain of our faith, was ‘made’ sinless – He never did sin.

* + - 1. “Patience” in this passage comes from the Greek word which means “endurance.”
    1. 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.
  1. 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.

1. trouble may bring excelling glory
   1. 1 Peter 4:12-14
      1. “Try” in this passage means “to test.”
      2. “The faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted.”
      3. Most people, when they get into trouble, ask, “Why me, Lord?”
         1. But these things are not strange, they happen to other people.
   2. 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.
   3. Stephen, the first martyr, shined like the face of an angel.
      1. Acts 6:15
   4. 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.
2. trouble may bring baffling mystery
   1. There are some things we cannot understand, because God’s thoughts are higher than ours.
      1. Isaiah 55:8-9
      2. Deuteronomy 29:29
         1. God will give us enough to know to obey Him.
      3. Warren Wiersbe: “We live by promises, not by explanations.”
      4. 2 Corinthians 5:7
      5. 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.
            1. Job 13:15
3. trouble will bring eternal victory
   1. Romans 8:18
      1. It’s not over yet.
      2. Our present suffering does not compare to the future glory.
   2. What a day that will be, at the midnight cry, when:
      1. He turns every hurt to a hallelujah.
      2. He turns every tear to a pearl.
      3. He turns every Calvary to an Easter.
      4. 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.
4. CONCLUSION
   1. If all of these things are true (which they are), can we not in everything give thanks?
   2. Give thanks always for all things, even in tough times.
   3. Jesus is our unspeakable gift. He is enough to be thankful.
      1. 2 Corinthians 9:15
   4. Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
   5. 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.
      1. Romans 3:23
      2. Romans 10:9-10
      3. Romans 10:13
      4. Acts 16:31
      5. John 3:16