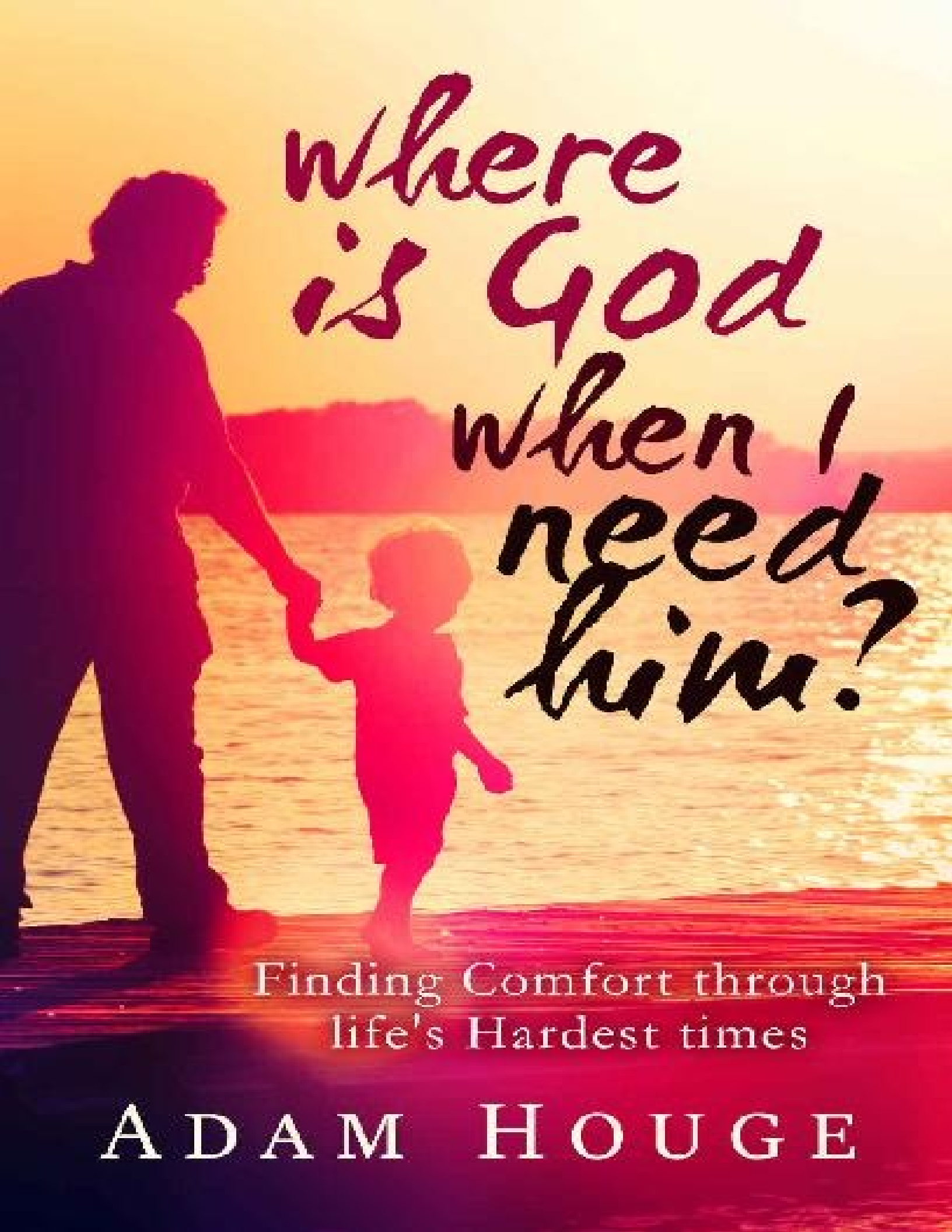


A silhouette of a man and a young child walking along a beach at sunset. The man is on the left, holding the child's hand. The child is on the right, walking towards the water. The background is a warm, orange and yellow sky over the ocean.

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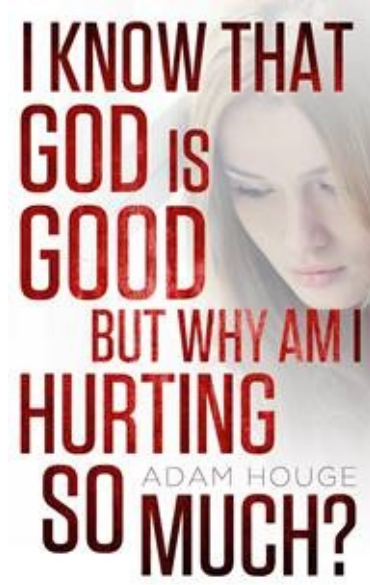


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When God Makes You Wait

When God Makes You Wait™

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Waiting Has a Purpose

Sunday service had just ended, and the pastor was lingering at the foot of the pulpit. He knew a group would approach him because there was always someone who wanted to talk after service. But that's when Margret—the last person he wanted to see that day—came storming up to him.

"It's useless," she grumped angrily. "It's completely worthless."

"What is?" the old man responded a little nervously, already knowing what she was getting at.

"The waiting place, of course!" she exclaimed. "Why am I here, anyway?"

Margret needed a financial miracle. She had previously been a personal secretary for an executive of a Fortune 500 company, and money was wonderful. But after her husband was diagnosed with liver cancer and fell critically ill, she was released for missing too many days to help him. Now, several months later, she was left in a place at which neither she nor her husband worked and bills kept piling up.

"If I wait any longer, I'm going to lose my home!" she barked at the man, now leaning forcefully over his cowering presence. "Why isn't God helping me?!"

The minister needed to step back to avoid her finger, which she was shaking furiously in his face.

"It was you, Pastor Bill!" she said as her finger assaulted him. "You told me He'd show up at the last minute! But the last minute is here, and where is God?"

Pastor Bill looked at her scowling face and then at the exit behind him. He contemplated ducking for cover rather than responding; but after a moment, he released a heavy sigh.

"Margret," he started, "slow down a minute."

"Slow down? *SLOW DOWN?!*" she yelled, now gaining the attention of some onlookers. "I don't have time to slow down! I've been looking everywhere for a job, and God hasn't heard me."

"God's timing is perfect," he tried to say in the Lord's defense, but Margret's impatience interrupted once more.

"Well, it'd be perfect timing if He did something now!"

“Margret, you’re doubting God.”

“Doubting? No, it’s plain to see I’m going to lose everything.”

“Maybe you should stop trusting in what you see. God isn’t going to work until He’s ready, and maybe He’s just waiting on you.”

“Me? How so?” she inquired demandingly.

“Look at yourself. You’re frantic and angry. Is this how Jesus acted going to the cross?”

“No,” she replied somberly.

“What if God is calling you to bear your cross right now? What if, by losing everything you have, you’ll gain everything that Christ is? Wouldn’t it be worth it then? To lose it all to gain Him?”

Margret hung her head for a moment. She was nearing retirement and her husband was a year away from his, but now she didn’t know what their future held. “Yes. He’s worth it,” she said. “I was just hoping He’d jump in and save the day.”

“Look at me. Look at my eyes,” the old man said, desiring her to know the sincerity his words held. “Your future doesn’t hold you. Jesus holds your future. Can you trust Him with your future?”

“Yes.”

“Maybe he hasn’t stepped in because you haven’t been trusting Him. Maybe you’ve been trusting your wealth, and now that it’s gone, you have nothing left to hold onto.”

Immediately Margret understood where she was going wrong. She felt she had all the faith in the world, but her faith was misplaced. She had hoped God would give her a new job to save her from her circumstances because her trust was secretly in the job and what the bank account said, not in God’s saving hand, though she hadn’t realized it. Now the Lord was testing her and stretching her through her trial, but she thought she was waiting for God to save her. Little did she know that God was giving her something even greater: wisdom for eternal life and a more intimate relationship with Jesus.

“Margret,” Pastor Bill continued, “I’ve seen it a thousand times. The waiting place isn’t a place of waiting at all. God is working silently behind the scenes to teach you something through your circumstances, and all you’ve been doing is

ignoring God's true intention for you. He wants to grow you, and if you press into that, repenting of your misplaced trust, you'll begin to experience His healing."

She hung her head again as she contemplated the facts. Then, after a moment, she responded with a nod, signifying that she finally understood. "God, I repent," she said out loud to the Lord. "I do believe Your love is better than life, and if You're calling me to lose it all to gain You, then I surrender Jesus. I'm sorry I've been hanging on so hard. If you want it, take it. I let go. Just hold my future, Jesus."

It was nearly two weeks after these final remarks when she received the phone call.

"Hello, is Margret available?" asked the man on the other end.

"Yes, this is she."

"Oh, good. This is Jim from Capital City Bank. I'm calling you regarding the pending foreclosure of your home."

Margret froze. She had been waiting for the bad news, but she hadn't realized it was time already. "I'm trying to get the money! It's just that I've been out of work for a long time and my husband—"

"Ma'am, I'm not calling about your payments right now," he started, but Margret interrupted in tears.

"Please, don't foreclose on me! I don't have anywhere to go. I don't have the money now, but I swear I'll pay. I've never had a problem paying in twenty-five years, and—"

"Ma'am. I understand, but this isn't what you think," he said, trying to find an opportunity to continue speaking. "I'm calling to let you know that your mortgage is paid off."

Margret's heart stood still. Then the man continued, "You'll be receiving the final documents in the mail."

"How is this possible?" she said in a different kind of tears.

"Someone paid your debt, ma'am, and covered the remaining \$25,000 on your loan."

"WHAT?! WHO?!"

“I don’t have the name here with me. My supervisor has that information. But there is a note on the account for you from the donor... If you wanted me to share it...”

“Yes!” she exclaimed after a dramatic pause.

“Now this is the donor words not ours, but the donor wanted you to know that: ‘God works all things together for good.’”

One of the church members who had never met Margret had heard her ranting and raving at the pastor two weeks prior and felt a tug from God. The man was a multimillionaire real estate investor who, incidentally, had just lost his personal assistant and was in need of a new one...

Needless to say, God patched Margret’s life back together. Her husband had a transplant and began making a recovery, and her new boss also helped with the medical bills. Even though she didn’t make as much as she used to, her husband was able to retire off of their income with the mortgage out of the way, and she was able to take the next five years to prepare for her retirement as well.

Sometimes God works in the most unexpected ways. However, the greatest place He works is in the waiting place. It is there, in the quietness and stillness, that He silently operates on your heart. Like a skillful surgeon, He removes the hardened places, the plaque and rigid vessels that you weren’t aware you had, and that won’t submit to His plan, then He gives you newer, softer, more pliable vessels for doing His will.

The Waiting Game

Nobody likes the waiting game. You've been seeking His will, but God isn't answering. Time and time again, you've prayed for direction but have turned up empty. It's that moment when crickets chirp louder than your thoughts. It's the waiting place.

Without fail, we end up in this place. Sometimes it ends quickly, but other times it drags on without end, perhaps leading you to wonder where God is in all the mess. In Margret's case, I can tell you where God was the entire time: by her side. Like the song "You Know Where to Find Me," written by Matthew Joseph West, says,

"If you ever need me
You know where to find me
I will be waiting
Where I've always been
If you ever need me
You know where to find me
I have never left you
I'm where I've always been
Right by your side
Right by your side"

It's the same place He is while He waits for you. The waiting place isn't really about our waiting for God but, rather, about God waiting for us. We think we're waiting for Him to reveal His will or the next step in His plan, but in truth He is waiting for our hearts to be prepared with the lesson He's teaching us.

So the waiting place isn't about waiting at all. Instead, it's a time of growth as we learn to be patient with God.

The Master Plan

Paul was in Troas waiting on God when he received the call. He had a vision of a man from Macedonia pleading with him to preach the gospel. So he gathered his things and left swiftly with his companions. Any other Christian in his shoes may have thought that the Lord was sending him or her on a mighty mission of victory. But Paul was certainly more cautious, allowing the wisdom of the Spirit to guide his heart.

Upon arriving in Philippi, the group settled in quickly but remained there for several days before anything happened. So Paul and Silas began searching for the will of God.

“I’ve found them!” the young man exclaimed from the door.

A man, in his late fifties by appearance, was seated on the edge of the bed. “Who?”

“Others. Jews! The Lord has shown me where the women meet,” said the young man.

Paul had sent out his companion Timothy to search while he and Silas meditated and prayed for direction. But now a smile drew across his face because the Lord began to reveal His will.

“Show us,” Paul said as he hastened to his feet.

The breeze was wonderful that late morning. The fresh scent of the nearby Gangites River captivated the men for a moment. A sense of deep peace covered the region near where a group of women was gathered. Usually this part of the shallow, slowly moving river was used by women to gather the water they needed. It was an ideal place for a woman of God to meet her sisters in the Lord because women were crossing each other’s paths daily as they prepared their families’ necessities. Conversations often sparked among the women, and the Jews enjoyed praying together at the water’s edge. In time a small handful of praying women slowly transformed into a large and stable group, for they shared a common heritage.

Every Sabbath they would meet at the same place to pray. They had been meeting there for years, and it seemed like an ideal, quiet area to seek the Lord together. Paul and his companions had come and spoke with the women. Many

were encouraged, but one particular woman had been touched by Paul's message and received the Lord. After he had baptized her in the river, she begged him and his men to remain with her family and not to waste money at the inn, nor to spend any nights in the open square. After they were convinced, they had remained with her to encourage her family in the Lord. Still, the man of Paul's vision hadn't yet appeared, so he continued to wait and pray for God's will to be revealed. Then, the next Sabbath, the unexpected happened.

The short, white stone wall that graced the side of the road acted as a barrier between the city and the field. The sun caught the stones at just the right angle, causing Silas to squint from the brightness. In this region, the small homes crafted from dried mud and clay brought a slight earthen scent to the air.

The men were leaving to join the women by the river for prayer. They passed a few small groups of villagers, who chattered amongst one another about the typical gossip. Then, as they passed a smaller group, a little girl emerged. She was short and wore slightly tattered clothing. Her neck was gripped by a collar upon which a rope was tied. The rope was held by two devious men, who used her for their own personal gain.

Her dirty face flinched and contorted as Paul and his companions walked by.

"It's them," said the crackling voice of the demon through the girl.

"Who?" asked the slave girl's owner. But rather than answer him, the girl compelled the men as a puppy does with its master through the leash.

"*THESE ARE THE MEN!*" cried the demon, gaining the attention of the nearby groups of people. Paul glanced back at the child and felt a chill run up his spine. Immediately he knew that she was possessed, but he tried to ignore her so he wouldn't be late for the prayer gathering.

"*THIS MAN LEADS THEM!*" she cried out again, pointing at Paul. The villagers were accustomed to the little girl making a scene, and they knew that whenever she did, something incredible was going to happen. So they followed behind her to see what fortune she might tell. Although Paul was growing perturbed by the demon's incessant ranting about them, he kept his peace.

"*THESE ARE THE SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD!*" she continued yelling. "*THEY BRING THE MESSAGE OF THE WAY OF SALVATION TO US!*"

Paul hastened with the men to leave her presence and joined the women in prayer. But as time went on, day after day, the girl wouldn't leave them alone. She followed them everywhere, and the owners enjoyed the attention because it reminded the people of her ability to tell a fortune. Paul, however, was greatly annoyed. Yet he kept silent as he tried to determine what God was doing because he still hadn't found the man of his vision.

Then, late one afternoon, the demon stood next to the men while the owners showed no respect at all. They both stood by, grinning ear to ear, as she hollered obnoxiously next to Timothy. Rather than taking her away, they allowed her to annoy them because it was good for their profit.

She yelled again, this time next to Paul, causing him to flinch from the noise. He grabbed Timothy and compelled him along with Silas to hasten away from the girl. But rather than letting them leave, this time she continued yelling from the distance. A couple of young women propped open the wooden shutters of their homes to see what all the commotion was about. Meanwhile, a small group formed nearby, still waiting anxiously for something to happen.

That's when Paul couldn't take it anymore. He stopped in his tracks and barked at the demon.

"I command you in the name of Jesus to come out of her!" Immediately the demon left, and he continued to walk away.

"What's wrong with you!" one of owners said to the girl as she stopped hollering. Yet she stood there, astonished, and offered no reply. Her face was no longer contorted, and she acted as if she was in her right mind.

One man left the group and drew near to the owners. Then he showed them some money.

"Look, this is all I have. I need to know what my future holds because my plans haven't been working out. Especially with the lack of rain, my crops are suffering. Can she tell me what's going to happen so I can prepare?"

The other owner happily took the money. "You are very wise, sir! There is nothing better than to prepare for your future, and this little one can tell you exactly what to expect." Then the man who took the money stooped down by the little girl. "Okay now, tell the man his fortune," he said with a friendly smile. But the girl offered no reply.

“Why don’t you say something? The man paid us!” the other owner, who held the leash, insisted with a tug. This motion choked the girl, and she cried.

“What’s wrong with your slave? Can’t she tell me anything?” the man asked. That’s when an old woman who stood nearby spoke up.

“That man told the spirit to leave her, and I think it listened.”

“*What?!*” the owner cried out. “That’s impossible!” But the customer shot them a look and snatched his money out of their hands, then walked away.

An angry pounding was heard from the front door. The young woman who had invited Paul to stay with her answered.

“Where is the man they call Paul?” asked the gruff-voiced soldier. They forced their way in without waiting for a reply and found him and Silas.

“Those are the men!” cried one of the slave girl’s owners.

Immediately Paul and Silas were bound and compelled to leave. The owners dragged them into the marketplace and brought them to the authorities to be judged before the magistrates.

“These men, being Jews, trouble our city immensely!” one of the owners testified. “They teach customs that aren’t lawful for us Romans, especially about a different king, named Jesus.” It was illegal to claim another king besides Caesar. According to Roman law, any man who served another king was to be killed, and any city that served a different king was to be destroyed. So this testimony troubled the magistrates greatly. The sounds of fabric tearing echoed through the chamber. Each man tore his garment in protest, and they commanded that Paul and Silas be beaten.

Afterward, Paul and Silas were thrown into the prison and left under guard. After a few moments, Silas spoke up about Paul’s vision and what the Lord might be doing. But then a voice from the darkness behind them spoke up.

“So much for your mission,” the other prisoner mocked. He had heard the two talking. “Where’s your God now?” Paul ignored this man, but Silas couldn’t keep quiet.

“We don’t need to know what God is doing, just what He’s telling us to do,” he said through his bruised mouth.

“Your God put you in prison. Some God He is,” the man continued mocking. “Unless, of course, you didn’t have a vision from a god but were only disillusioned by a fantasy of your mind, brought on by the heat of the day.”

Silas kept his peace and, with Paul, chose to ignore the man. Then the two worshipped loudly in faith while they waited in chains for God’s faithfulness.

Immediately, the foundation of the prison was shaken, and the whole region roared with an earthquake. The chains fell off the men, and the prison doors burst open. The guard was terrified that the prisoners had escaped, for Roman law commanded that if a guard lost his prisoners, he was to be put to death. So rather than wait for the humiliation his superiors would give him, he drew his sword and prepared to fall on it.

“He’s going to kill himself!” a man from a nearby cell yelled. Paul looked around the corner and saw the guard at the top of the stairs. Then he yelled to him, “We’re all here! Do not harm yourself!” and by these words he saved his life.

The guard, having heard their worship and having seen the power of God, fell down in tears because his life was spared. Then, like the man in Paul’s vision, he begged Paul and Silas on his knees that they would preach the gospel to him and his family.

A Reason for Everything

Similarly to what transpired in this fictionalized story about Paul's journey to Macedonia, you might also experience moments of apparent defeat. While we don't know whether Paul was mocked in prison or not, we can assume that Satan likely attempted to afflict his conscious. Whether this is true or not is mere speculation since it isn't written in the Scriptures. However, we know from our own experiences that when a decision in life suddenly knocks us off our feet, the devil likes to kick us while we're down and make us question God. You also may receive afflictions from within or from others around you during such situations. But the only way out is the same way Paul and Silas chose: through praise.

The word of God tells us that when they chose to worship from the pit of the prison, the Lord opened the prison doors. It wasn't a moment sooner. Likewise, you will be set free from your imprisoning trials through praise. Knowing this, you must learn to praise God no matter what life throws at you.

And just because life threw an unexpected curveball doesn't always mean you took a wrong step in your walk. When all the doors start closing, it doesn't mean disaster is coming; it means that God is about to open a new door. While turmoil and trials can take place, your final resting place will not be in the ash heap. God intends to use these situations for good and will most certainly lift you out of the pit into which you fell.

Consider Paul's situation. He was waiting in Troas for the Lord after experiencing several dead ends. First they wanted to go to Asia, but the Holy Spirit forbade them. Then they tried to go to Bithynia, but again the Spirit didn't permit them. It seemed that every turn they took resulted in a closed door. But when they waited in Troas, the Lord revealed His will through a vision. Sometimes before God reveals His plan, you will experience a series of closed doors. When this happens, God is calling you to sit down and pray until He speaks. This isn't merely a single moment of prayer, but a season of praying. Then Paul, having applied this tactic, received a vision while He waited. Closed doors don't mean it's the end.

Satan would like to deceive you in those moments to think that God's will is too complex to understand and all you should do is act in your own wisdom. But whenever you are pressed to make a decision, it is likely Satan, not God, pressing you, so that you would step out in your own strength without the Lord.

Without the Lord, you will sink in the ocean rather than walking on water. So never obey the compelling force to make a decision but, rather, drown out the wind and waves through focusing on the presence of God. Then, when the Spirit speaks, you will hear Him clearly.

Under certain, rare circumstances, such as during a crisis, you may be pressed to make a decision. Due to your own state of heart, it could be difficult to hear the Lord. However, if you are literally forced to make a decision and have no choice, then God may have already given you the wisest idea. Only once in my life has this ever happened, so it may never even happen in yours. But if you are forced to make a decision, let's say by an authority (a boss, a judge, etc.), then whatever seems most concrete as a defining answer may be the direction God is leading you. If not, then choosing the concrete decision could release the pressure while you still privately pursue the other options.

Just because the pressure is off doesn't mean your decision is over; you can still actively explore the other options. However, in the end, you will most likely find that the concrete decision was the one God wanted you to make. If not, then at least the authorities let the pressure off and you were able to find God's will safely afterward by exploring the alternatives.

In truth, if you are pressured with a decision, either Satan is pressuring you and you need to wait on the Lord or God has already opened a door for you to walk through but you haven't realized it yet. However, 99.99 percent of the time, God will speak to you if you wait, and that is the safest thing for you to do. But if you don't listen intently by meditating on the Holy Spirit through prayer and worship, you may never hear the Lord when He speaks. It is easy to be distracted when everything around you is crashing down and falling apart. Remember, though, that Peter fell in the water when he was distracted by the crashing waves and howling wind.

It's also important to realize that not every road down which God leads you will end in what you expect to be victory. Consider that Jesus was led to the cross, and so was Peter at the end of his life. James was murdered by Herod's men, and Stephen was full of the Spirit when he was stoned to death. Paul's experience in Macedonia is also a good reminder of this fact. If God gave you a mighty vision and compelled you to preach the gospel at a specific place, would you expect to end up in the pit of a prison in the end? Or would you expect victory? When God tells us to do something, sometimes we question the Lord—or our understanding of His voice—when failure happens. Yet just because we've failed doesn't mean we haven't heard from Him. Either it was always in His plan, and He intends to

use our crosses to reveal the resurrecting power of Jesus, or we have sinned.

When we sin, we veer off course. To sin means “to miss the mark.” So when we miss the mark in our walks, we have taken a wrong turn and chosen something that appealed to our own heart rather than obey the will of God. This doesn’t always happen in an obvious way, and due to the subtle nature sin can have, we must be even more vigilant as to our state of heart.

That sin can lead to failure is evident. Consider that the Israelites failed to take Ai after Achan disobeyed God in Jericho and kept treasure for himself. As we read,

“So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

“Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. And Joshua said, ‘Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!’”
Joshua 7:4–7

Then the Lord made clear that the failure was due to sin being in the camp of Israel. As the Lord said,

“So the LORD said to Joshua: ‘Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Get up, sanctify the people, and say, “Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.’”’” Joshua 7:10–13

Likewise, if you have experienced failure, there may be sin in the “camp.” The waiting place in this example is really just God giving us a time-out to repent. Examine your own heart and be humble enough to admit your faults. The only

way out is through repentance.

Now, if you're married with children, the sin could be a mistake any of the members of your family might have made. You are one body in Christ and must move and walk in Jesus as one body. However, it is always best to start with yourself and not to point fingers. Then ask every other person to do the same, inspecting his or her own heart to know who made the mistake so that the sin can be eradicated through repentance.

Most often, what you view as failure will really be a part of God's plan. Ending up in a prison experience, like Paul, doesn't mean you took a wrong turn. However, it is good to pray and ask the Lord at that time if you did make a mistake. He will reveal it to you because He gave you the experience so He could get your attention for repentance. If He reveals that it wasn't sin, then embrace His will for you and worship Him, even though it may seem difficult in the moment.

We may not always understand why things go wrong, and whether we do or don't doesn't change the fact that God is still worthy of our praise. Don't allow your inability to understand a situation keep you from glorifying the Lord through every moment of life. Job didn't understand why he lost his children and everything he owned, but he still praised God through it all, and we should be found doing likewise.

Praise God No Matter What!

There will be times in your life when you may wonder how God can bring anything good out of your situation, but He is capable of anything. Remember that God created the heavens and the earth and saw that it was good. How did He do this? In the vast emptiness of nothing, God made something. And in the moments of nothingness in your life, God will create good and bring every circumstance together for good. He also will use the bad for good. It isn't that there is anything good about the sufferings you go through, but that He is so powerful He can and will turn the worst moment of your life into good.

I once knew a man who lost his five-year-old daughter. After she died, he sought comfort from one of his friends, asking him, "How could God let this happen?" His friend, thinking he knew the proper answer, said, "God works all things together for good."

This enraged the man, and he had to be restrained from punching his friend.

"What good is there in my daughter's death? How can you call it good?" the man yelled.

His friend, not understanding the scripture, thought that God had allowed the man's daughter to die for a good reason and the Lord would reveal that reason later down the road. But in truth, the scriptures don't say that God actually is the one working the destruction in our life. Look at Job's life. Who destroyed him? Who killed his children? It was Satan who incited the Lord. God's own hand cannot and will not rise up against the righteous. He will rise against their sins for repentance, but not against their righteousness. Remember also that the word says,

"The word of the LORD came again to me, saying: 'Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,' says the Lord GOD." Ezekiel 14:12-14

God didn't consider Noah's family to be as righteous as he was. We know Ham, for one, was very unrighteous and mocked his father. The Lord could have killed his sons in the flood and repopulated the earth with new descendants from Noah. So why did God spare them? Likely for Noah's sake.

Consider for a moment: Why was Jesus crucified? To save life and spare it, not destroy it. So God gave His own Son to spare our lives. Why, then, would He want to take it? Why did Jesus grieve at the tomb of Lazarus? As it is written,

“Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’

“They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’

“Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how He loved him!’

“And some of them said, ‘Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?’

“Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’

“Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, ‘Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.’” John 11:33–39

Jesus wept because He felt for those who had lost their loved one. Then, with a groaning in His heart, He commanded that the stone be rolled away to raise the dead. Even so, God will roll your stones away and bring life to your desolate moments. All you have to do is wait for His word. Then when He speaks, He will command your situation to come to life and bring you joy.

It doesn't matter how murky your life may be: Remember that when God created Adam, He reached into dirt and pulled a man out. His hand dipped into a mud pit and brought forth life. When you look at your circumstances, don't say to yourself, “How can God bring anything good out of this?” because you are thereby declaring, “I can't see how God will create anything good; therefore, I am not going to believe He will” when the Scriptures make clear that faith isn't something you see. Just because you can't see a way out doesn't mean God isn't going to create it. A miracle doesn't require possibility, and the Lord doesn't need the physical laws of nature or the understanding of man to accomplish His will. For as the Lord reached into the mud, so God will reach into the muck of your life and pull out something beautiful.

Until then, worship God while you wait. As the song “While I'm Waiting” by John Waller says,

“While I'm waiting I will serve You

While I'm waiting I will worship

While I'm waiting I will not faint

I'll be running the race even while I wait"

No matter what happens, be found running the race and worshipping God. Isn't the Lord worthy of this? Isn't He worthy of your praise while you wait for His faithfulness to unfold in your life? When God is silent, be occupied with seeking Him. Meditate on the Spirit and His presence; then, when He speaks, keep your face lifted in prayer and your hands raised in worship. Remember that it is written,

"Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.' In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong."
Job 1:20–22

If you want to be found righteous, even as God found Job righteous, then no matter what may be happening in your life, be found doing likewise—worshipping God from your heart.

The Real Reason Why God Makes You Wait

There are multiple reasons why God makes you wait, but usually it is either for your growth while He makes preparation or for sin, as we previously mentioned. When you're waiting, you won't always understand why, but the best way to get through the hiatus of your pilgrimage is through continually abiding and seeking the Lord.

When God is making preparations, He isn't only preparing the circumstances that lie ahead of you. After all, He has the power to have them prepared beforehand so that you need not wait. So while He may be preparing the situation for you, He also is preparing your heart for eternal life.

Many times when we experience a waiting period, the only thing we can think of is getting through it. However, God wants us to focus on the lesson at hand. If you aren't aware of it, then focus on prayer, worship, and studying your Bible. Sometimes after the waiting period you'll have 20/20 hindsight; thus, God will grant you wisdom from your circumstance after it's over.

Not every season of waiting is the same. Sometimes we wait in turmoil, wondering where God is and why He's allowing us to suffer rather than swooping down and saving the day. In other situations, we're waiting for the next blessing to start, and we must learn patience while we wait. Both of these situations are similar to King David's experiences.

After he was thrust out from the presence of Saul, David was forced to live in the wilderness. David had been honored before a king and anointed by God through His prophet to be a king himself, yet where did he end up? On the run, hiding in the forests and fields, constantly in danger for years. Saul sought him diligently to kill him.

Sometimes a similar situation can happen to us: God confirms to us that He will bless us with something in life, but then after a time of waiting for Him, we end up in a trial. During that trial it becomes impossible for us to receive the blessing God promised. Then we may be tempted to pray, "God, why did You let this happen? I thought You said I would receive that blessing! But now it's impossible."

However, the Lord allows such situations to occur because it isn't time to receive the blessing. He merely informed us in advance of His intention, and we should feel blessed to know the future. How we get there is up to God. So, rather than

questioning God, we should wait patiently to receive what He's promised. Also, we need to remember that nothing in heaven or on earth has the power or ability to stop God. He doesn't require possibility to work because He isn't governed by the laws of nature or the logic of man. As the inventor of nature's laws, He is above the law and can create new laws if He wants to do so. So if God said to you He will do something, then all you need to do is believe with patience.

These waiting periods are really just testing grounds. During these periods the Lord tests our hearts to see if we will believe Him and follow Him through everything. Sometimes He allows trials to arise and the devil to push us for this same reason. When we feel driven to make a decision or else suffer, we are given the choice to remain in our trial and obey God or to forsake the word of the Lord and use our own logic to escape the situation. Perhaps it may be possible for human logic to deliver you from the trial. However, sometimes God does want you to be delivered immediately so that you may learn from it. And even though human logic can deliver you from a temporary trial it has never been able to preserve you for eternal life.

Thus, God allows you to suffer your circumstances through pure and perfect love as He prepares your heart and soul to live forever. As a Christian you must learn to be led by the Spirit at all times. Christian literally means "follower of Christ." So if you choose to follow your own way out of a situation rather than follow the Spirit of Jesus, how are you being Christian at all? Following the Spirit step by step is fundamental to a walk with Christ. Hence, it is written,

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Romans 8:14

And as it is also written,

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'" Matthew 16:24

It is for this exact reason that we are forced to wait in trials, because God is teaching us to wait patiently for the words of His Spirit so that we can live by them. This concept was also foreshadowed by Israel's desert experience, as they waited forty years to be prepared for the promise of God. And this foreshadowing applies perfectly to your waiting experiences as well. As it is written,

"And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in

your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” Deuteronomy 8:2–3

Sometimes God will humble you, but only to teach you to wait for and live by the voice of His Spirit. But why must we live by His words? Because every time He speaks, the natural response must be with faith. As the Scriptures tell us,

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17

Why is faith in His word so important? Because faith saves us, as the Scriptures say:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith...” Ephesians 2:8

Since faith saves you, do you see why it’s important to grow in faith? God grants you an opportunity, through the need to wait for His word, to increase your faith for your eternal security. So even though it may feel as if God is destroying you through your trials, He is actually building eternal life in you. When God breaks down, He really is building up, and when the Lord brings you low, it’s to raise you up again. For Jesus said that those who want to be greatest must first be least.

Why then, Beloved, would you grieve if God has allowed you to be brought very low? But know this: that if you have been humbled, it’s because God desires to exalt you and prepare you for eternal life. Remember also that Jesus was crucified before He was resurrected. So if you want the resurrecting power of God to be on full display in your life, then you must first learn to embrace your cross. Jesus embraced His for the joy set before Him. Therefore, go and do likewise, knowing that an eternal relationship with the Lord is far greater than any earthly thing—if indeed you do believe that His love is better than life.

The second way David waited was when he was going from one blessing to another. First, he received the kingdom of Judah while he waited for the other eleven tribes God had promised him. As it is written,

“Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.” 2 Samuel 2:10–11

It took seven years before David saw the full blessing of God—seven! You also may be forced to wait much longer than you would ever desire. Nonetheless, learn to be patient with the Lord while you wait to receive the blessings.

Now, one may ask why God makes us wait for such a long time before receiving a greater blessing. Yet as we mentioned previously, our periods of waiting are not idle moments of life. During them God is operating on our hearts to prepare us for the blessings that lie ahead.

This is similar to how Israel received the kingdom little by little instead of God driving the nations out quickly. As it is written,

“I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.” Exodus 23:29–30

And as Moses furthermore said,

“And the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, and will inflict defeat upon them until they are destroyed.” Deuteronomy 7:22–23

Likewise, God drives our trials out little by little, one by one, as He grows us to a full stature in Christ. If we are ill prepared for the Lord’s blessings, as was Israel receiving the Promised Land, then the beasts of our hearts will rise up and overtake us. Our flesh will lust beyond the blessing of God. Even as it is also written,

“Remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches—feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.” Proverbs 30:8–9

When we receive too great of an abundance, we learn to rely on the material blessings rather than on our Lord who gave them. For this reason we receive the blessings little by little as we grow in the Lord and learn to walk with Him—taking each step one by one as He leads us.

Therefore, I’d like to encourage you to pray right now and ask the Lord why He is requiring you to endure this season of waiting. This shouldn’t be a one-time

prayer but, rather, an ongoing pursuit for His answer. That way He may increase your wisdom. So use this season to pray fervently and to abide.

Whether you are waiting quietly and learning patience or are suffering through a trial while you wait, take this time to worship the Lord. Thank Him right now for this opportunity for blind faith that He will work it together for good. However, be extremely attentive to His voice and don't make any assumptions, for the waiting place can end in a series of unexpected twists and turns. If you aren't following right at the heels of the Spirit, you will certainly stray off course.

So this is the most important time to learn the practice of continual prayer and worship. Have you ever tried to pray all day without ceasing? Have you tried to allow the Holy Spirit to guide your prayers and your mouth as you pray the entire day? If not, I'd like to encourage you to do that now. Worship in faith that He will restore and bless you in His perfect timing. Furthermore, pray constantly for direction and wisdom.

By nature, if you pray and worship constantly, you will be more attentive to the voice of the Lord. Thus, when He speaks, you will hear Him clearly the first time and be able to follow him perfectly through every dip, hop, twist, and turn in the jungle of life. For this reason I challenge you today to pursue the will and wisdom of God through continuous prayer and praise.

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God Bless!

When You Need Healing

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Embracing His Comfort

“But why did my daughter have to die?! How could God let this happen to me? A parent should never outlive his child!” Eric growled as he gnashed his teeth at his friend. He was grieving and looking for comfort but wasn’t finding the answers he wanted.

“I don’t know,” his friend replied. Then thinking he had an appropriate answer he continued, “but what I do know is that God works all things together for good. Romans 8:28. Read it. It’ll encourage you.”

The bridge of his friend’s nose nearly met Eric’s knuckles. But before he hit him Eric’s presence was suddenly pressed back by a group of nearby men, who could sense the tension snapping. “How can any good come out of my daughter’s death?!” he raged as the men pinned him against the wall.

It had been a few weeks ago when he received the call. Eric was sitting at his desk, filing a few papers, when his phone rang.

“Hello, thank you for calling...”

“Eric...” his wife’s devastated voice interrupted. “It’s Julie.”

“Oh, hi honey! What’s wrong?”

“It’s August,” she replied. Eric continued to shuffle through a few more documents, then reached down to put them in the drawer.

“Oh, yeah? What’s wrong with my princess? I hope she isn’t sick. I promised I would take her out for ice cream today,” he said as the phone dangled between his ear and shoulder.

“August was at Maddie’s...” Julie paused for a moment, then when couldn’t restrain herself any further, she broke down. “Eric, August was hit by a drunk driver on the way home!”

“WHAT?” Eric shouted in horror. Several of his nearby coworkers glared at him for his noise. All of them were taking calls in the call center.

“Julie, how could this happen? It’s the middle of the day! Who drinks in the middle of the day?”

“I don’t know...” She started.

“Is she okay?” Eric asked, still in a panic.

“Eric, come home.”

“Julie! Is August okay?!”

But her answer came with tears. “Eric, just come home...”

“Julie! Tell me if my daughter is okay!” Eric barked. Then, after a moment, she answered.

“No.”

The vehicle August was in had been knocked into a street sign sideways at the small four-way stop. The sign had twisted and then punched into the vehicle through the window, and she had been impaled. The doctors wished they could say she had died quickly, but she didn't. Her screams had been heard for at least fifteen minutes before she passed out from blood loss. By the time she had arrived in the emergency room, she was dead. Her passing had been slow and excruciating.

Now Eric was left wondering how God could allow his precious, beautiful little six-year-old girl to suffer so horribly before dying.

It was early in the year 2003 when I met Eric. It had been at least ten years since his tragedy, and you would never have been able to guess he had endured that. With time, God provided him healing and made him a comfort to others.

I was suffering in my own trial when I met him. I was struggling financially, and after rent and bills were paid, I was left with less than \$40 per month for food. When I shared my situation with him, he had words of encouragement for me. After he told me about his daughter, I was in tears.

“How could you heal from something like that?” I asked him.

“Heal? I couldn't heal. Not on my own, that is. It was God who healed me. I wasted so much time blaming Him for my problems. I admit I was mad at God. But when I decided to believe that He's good no matter what happens to me, that's when the healing began.”

He took a moment to pause as he thought about the details of his daughter's death. A tear glinted off his cheek before he wiped his eye.

“I couldn't have done it without Him,” he continued. “The Lord has done so much to love me and heal me.” He stopped again to cry as he grieved over his past mistakes. “I didn't hate God. How could I? I mean, I'm His son. I love Him.

But I was so mad at Him—as if it were His fault. What was wrong with me?”

He turned to look me in the eyes. “You know what it all came down to? I was mad about the time I lost with my daughter. So I was given the option: Keep being mad at God for the time I had lost, or praise Him for the time I had with her.”

His face was sprinkled with tears, but this time he wasn’t ashamed of them. “I chose to thank God. I didn’t deserve to have such a beautiful girl like August. She was my heart, and I lost my heart the day I lost her. But God gave my heart back to me, and He taught me to be grateful for the time I have with the people I love. Because you never know when you’ll lose them.”

I was speechless. There wasn’t much I could say. I wanted to comfort him, but he had already found solace in Christ. Now he was sharing his story to comfort me in my trials. In fact, God used his story to comfort countless others.

“I want you to do something for me,” he continued. “If you have kids go home and give them a hug. Be grateful for what I don’t have. When God blesses you with something, be thankful for it while you have it. If you fall into a trial, remember how He’s blessed you. God is always faithful. So remember His faithfulness and cling to it when things get hard. Because if He’s been faithful before, He’ll be faithful again.”

I felt so blessed and inspired by him. I couldn’t stop sitting in awe of his faith.

“I know where my daughter is,” he continued boldly. “I feel so bad about the way she got there, but whether you suffer before you die or just die quickly, the point is that you die. You can’t control how you go, and I had no control over my daughter’s situation. So sometimes we just have to accept our circumstances and let God have control.

“Besides, the end result is always peace when it’s in the Lord’s hands. I know that as soon as she passed, her suffering was over. She’s at peace waiting for me, and when I get there, I’ll have my baby back forever.”

The way in which Eric overcame his trial helped me overcome my minor trial. While my trial was a big deal to me, the devastating, heart-wrenching ordeal he had endured made my situation seem like nothing.

Death exists because of sin, the Bible tells us. It’s not that we die the way we deserve for the sins we commit—as if that little girl deserved to go the way she did! Rather, it’s that we live in a corrupted world, and suffering and unfairness

reign in this place because of sin. But God has given us a way out of this circumstance: Jesus. So embrace Him and let Him comfort you.

God is always there for you, holding you and embracing you through it all. You're never suffering alone. The Lord is with you, shedding a tear every time you do. He cares more about you than you could imagine, so don't let the pain push you away from Him.

Some people choose to bottle the pain inside. They shut down, and they close all the doors of their heart. They don't even release it to God. But if you pray, and release your hurting to Him, He will hear your prayer—and in time, in His perfect timing, He will bless you.

The End of Your Trial is Coming

God has determined a set time for your trial to end. He sees it in the distance and knows the day. All you have to do is keep in step with the Spirit of God.

Find comfort in His arms, but also take this time to sensitize yourself to His voice. God is the only one who knows the way out of the valley, so let Him lead you. Be attentive to His voice and swift to obey. Make the decisions He tells you to make. Take the steps He tells you to take.

When need overtakes you, it is only natural to fret. But resist the temptation to resolve your issue yourself, and instead rely on God. Who made Peter walk on water? Was it not the Lord? Even so, God will raise you up from your situation and make you walk on the waves of your suffering.

If you've lost a loved one, then obviously that trial won't go away. The best way forward is to find constant comfort in the Spirit of God.

No matter where you're at or what you're going through, there is no better time to rest in the Spirit and walk in Him. Follow His lead, and He will lift your heart up again.

Finding Healing

Everyone has suffered a moment in life that left him or her asking, “God, why did You let this happen to me?”

Uncertainty and brokenness can lead us to question why He permits evil. But He allows certain trials to happen in order to shape our character and help us to develop a deeper, more intimate relationship with Him. God’s hand can certainly stop the painful moments of life from happening, but the blessings He has for us in the end are greater than the means to get there. Even as it is written,

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Romans 8:18

God has so much more in store for you. Not only does He have blessings for you in the next life, but He also has them here for you now, today. These blessings involve a more intimate relationship with Him.

Now, some struggle with this. “How can I be encouraged by that? God will give me blessings one day, but I’m hurting now!”

When we reflect on His faithfulness and surrender to His embrace, however, we find comfort. But by sitting in the whirlpool of grief, we will drown ourselves in sorrow.

Wherever you’re at, you need to reach out to God. You must sit in His presence constantly. This is more than sitting quietly in the secret place; this is taking the time to abide in the Spirit all day long. Whether you’re working, taking care of children, driving a car, or lying in bed, be found praying and worshipping. By prayer you will receive the comfort and blessings of the Lord. By worshipping God during your suffering, you are showing yourself to be righteous, in that you believe God is worthy of praise no matter what you go through.

Even as Job did, so we must do:

“Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?’

“So Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he

has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’

“And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.’

“So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

“Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house; and a messenger came to Job and said, ‘The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided them and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’

“While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’

“While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’

“While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’

“Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.”
Job 1:8–22

Job praised God in His suffering. Worship unleashes waves of joy that might otherwise not exist. It is not the action of worship itself that does this. Rather, it is the presence of God, which you experience while you praise.

God tests our faith through our trials. But Satan tempts us to blame God. Notice that the Lord permitted Job’s situation, but He wasn’t the one who created it—Satan was. So the devil comes along and destroys you without cause, then He tempts you to think it’s God’s fault.

“God could have stopped this. Why did He allow it to happen? Curse Him!” the devil would tell you. But in this, he testifies against himself. For he claims that

God deserves cursing for allowing trials to happen, yet the devil is the one who hurts you.

In a few cases, God's hand may be directly behind your trial. But this is only when He is disciplining you for sin. Examine your heart in such a case and repent. This is where Job's friends went wrong. The only trials of which they knew were from God's disciplining hand. And no wonder, since they were so unloving! Because of their incomplete knowledge, they accused Job of harboring a hidden sin. But God was merely testing Job, and sometimes bad things happen to good people.

Even though Job had suffered the loss of all his children and everything he owned, he didn't curse God. Rather, he worshipped the Lord, and we should keep the same heart. If we do so, God will speak in our favor as He did for Job. As we read,

"Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.'" Job 2:3

The devil incited God, and the Lord permitted it to test Job. God tested Job one more time after this, and Satan said,

"Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" Job 2:4–5

As we know, God later revealed Himself to Job in a whirlwind. Likewise, God will call out to you, not from the edge of the storm but from its center. While Satan may be the destroyer, you will find that in the middle of the tornado, God is there—ready to embrace you, love you, and restore you in His compassion.

As we also read,

"Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." James 5:11

Job had as many children the second time as he had lost previously. The couple of paragraphs that describe Job's restoration make it sound like a quick healing. However, this is due mainly to the fact that so little of the narrative is dedicated to how he was restored. But if you consider the facts, that a child takes about ten

months from conception to birth to be born, then you must realize that it took Job nearly ten years to receive back what he had lost in one day. And that's only if the mother was pregnant with each child back to back, with only two months of healing in between pregnancies. So in reality, Job's restoration may have taken much longer than ten years to realize.

God works on a slower timetable, but when His blessings arrive, they are powerful and beautiful. If you're patient and rest in His Spirit while you wait, you'll find His comfort. God made you to love you, so let Him. Release your pains and fear to Him. Let Him have your anxieties.

Making the Best of Your Circumstances

John was tilling soil on his father's tractor when the accident happened.

Since they lived on a 200-acre farm, his dad had decided to teach him the value of hard work at an early age. In fact, he had learned how to drive the tractor when he was nine years old. But now that he was twelve, he was allowed to take the rifle with him to manage pests. This generally was a good idea, except for the fact that John tended not to keep his eyes on where he was going.

Their farm had a chronic pest problem. From gophers to deer, there was always something trying to eat their crops. When the ground was warm enough to till, it was usually an opportune time to find where the gophers were hiding. Otherwise, they would disappear in the rows of corn.

It was a cool, dark morning when John jumped on his dad's tractor. The sun was barely peeking over the horizon when he grabbed his rifle. He took his seat and started the machine up with a rumble.

The early morning was the best time to check for fresh gopher activity, so he didn't mind getting up. It offered him a chance to have a little fun and get in some target practice.

John took to his rows right away, following along the path had he left off with the previous day. The area he was tilling was a small back section of the property that jutted out from the main farmland. A short wood-and-barbwire fence lay alongside the field, about three feet from the edge, so he had to be careful not to veer off course.

He looked up at the sun-dazzled dirt and saw something skitter in the distance. John checked through the scope of the gun while the tractor trundled along, and sure enough, it was a gopher. He steadied his aim as best he could and bore down on the critter in the distance.

All it took was one shot—to send that gopher running to its home, that is.

“Drat!” John sighed. “Missed again.” He'd been trying to kill that rodent for the past two days, since he had first spotted it. But that old gopher seemed to evade every bullet he sent its way.

He kept his eyes on its home in the distance. Yesterday, after he startled it, it had popped its head out again after a few minutes. So this time, John was keeping his eyes fixed on that spot, and he left the safety on his gun off so that he could take

a shot quickly if he got another chance.

When John made it to the end of his row, he needed to set the gun down on his lap to turn and steady the tractor again. After turning, he was running along the fence, so he needed to pay close attention to the edge. But he was afraid that gopher might pop its head out and he'd miss it. So he steadied the tractor, and when he felt it was following the course well enough on its own, he looked behind him. After a few minutes, he let his guard down because the machine was running smoothly. With his hands to the wheel, he turned his head back again and kept watching.

But after a couple of minutes of not paying attention, the tractor veered off course. It plowed straight into the fence. Loud crunching and whirring sounds were heard from under the machine as it demolished the wood-and-wire structure.

The tractor jerked to a stop, and the gun fell from John's lap and off of the tractor. When the butt of the gun hit the ground, the weapon fired off a round into his arm.

The force of the bullet threw him from the tractor, knocking the wind out of him temporarily. He checked the wound and found that the bullet had hit the main artery that ran through his arm, and he was losing blood fast.

"Oh, God. Oh, God! Please save me, God!" he cried out.

His father was back at the barn, which sat several hundred yards away, when it happened. He had no idea about his son's situation because the sound of gunshots was normal to him. John was stuck at the farthest end of the property without anyone to help him, and he was about to die.

He took his belt off and made a tourniquet, using a small, thin fragment of the fence to turn it. He wanted to climb back up the tractor to get to his dad, but he was already going into shock and was too weak from the fall to stand. So he lay there in a pool of his own blood, begging God to save him.

Old Mr. Hansen from the neighboring field was supposed to till a distant section of his property that day, but his tractor broke down unexpectedly, and he couldn't fix it. So he decided to play around on his ATV while he waited for his mechanic to show up.

He had heard John firing his gun earlier, so he thought he'd head to the edge of the property to check it out. That's when he found the boy, wallowing in blood.

John's pulse was weak, and the boy gave no response. The old man acted fast and put him on the rack of his ATV. Then he brought the boy back to his own house, which was quicker than taking him to the boy's home. He took him to the hospital without a moment to spare, then called John's parents.

By a miracle, God saved John's life. He should have been dead, and would have been if Old Farmer Hansen's tractor hadn't broken down that day. But God, knowing in advance what would happen, prepared help before John even needed it.

John was in the hospital room, lying awake, when his mother came in. She fell on him, full of tears, while she quietly thanked God that her boy was still alive. Then John gave her a hug with his good arm.

"I'm sorry, mom..." He tried to console her, but it wasn't enough. The thought of her precious baby losing his arm tore her apart. John may have survived the ordeal, but the injured arm had been too torn up to repair, so the doctors had to amputate it. Now he had to go through life with only one arm because of a single mistake he had made.

For years he beat himself up over it. He couldn't swim at the quarry with his friends any more. He loved playing sports, but never again would he run with a football, pass a basketball, or hit a baseball. He cried when he had to learn to drive. His family's vehicle had a clutch, and you need two arms for that—one to shift gears and another to hold the wheel steady.

His decision on that one day changed his life. It took a piece of his heart when it happened, and it ruined him for years. Then, as a young man, he decided that his accident shouldn't define who he was in Jesus Christ.

It had been nearly 35 years since the accident when I met John. I was attending the Saturday morning men's study at church when he came walking in. It was my first day there, and being new to the church, I was excited to get to know the group members.

John took his coat off, then proceeded to help everyone else out of their coats. He gathered the jackets one by one as he hung them up in the nearby closet. While everyone was seated and the pastor was gathering his notes, John fired up the coffee maker. After a few minutes, he came walking out with the pot in hand, and everyone had their mugs ready. Each man had brought his own empty travel mug, knowing the morning ritual.

This routine was John's idea, originally. Everyone used to bring their own

coffee, but when several of the men forgot their morning brew, they could hardly learn anything from the study, being tired. So John decided to make it a custom to brew coffee for them so that everyone could be encouraged together by the Bible study.

Every day, John served the men in any way he could find. He prayed for open eyes, and the Lord constantly showed him each person's need. Then he happily stepped in to fill the need, no matter how great or how small. In the beginning, the men refused to be served, but he insisted, and his kindness was an inspiration to everyone.

I tried to resist him, and I mentioned that I should be serving him. But he smiled as he poured my coffee, and he informed me of his heart.

“When I was young, I was grieved about my loss. But then it occurred to me that I need to be the example of Jesus, no matter what life throws at me. So I prayed, ‘Lord, I wish I had two hands to serve you. But that was robbed from me. So I will honor you with my one good arm.’ And from that day forward, I took up a servant's heart.”

He encouraged me in this. Here was a one-armed man, whom we should be serving, but instead he humbled himself to be the servant. If this man would serve God diligently with all his heart, having only one arm, then how much more should we serve God with our two hands? All it takes is the right heart.

Don't let your circumstances define who you are in Jesus, but let Jesus define you. Don't allow your circumstances define your relationship with the Lord, either. Rather, let God refine your faith and bless you in His Spirit as you seek comfort from Him.

No matter what life throws at you, serve the Lord. While you're waiting for Him to save you, take the time to worship Him. Don't wait for life to be right to honor Him.

Glorify Him with what you have. If you have one arm, honor Him with it. If you've lost everything you own and only have two empty hands, then raise them up in worship. He deserves as much, and doing so will refresh your heart.

God Holds You Through It All

The Lord created you to love you. You are a precious, well-thought-out creation of God. He didn't make you to watch you suffer while doing nothing for you. His heart is tenderly connected to yours even as a mother's heart is to her nursing infant. When we say, "The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me" (Isaiah 49:14), the Lord replies,

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands..." Isaiah 49:15–16

No matter what, God is always there for you. Jesus didn't go through His horrifying death just to abandon you in the midst of your needs. He remembers and cherishes your needs. He will save you from every trial and lift you out of every pit. God will take care of all of your daily needs as you pray for your "daily bread."

Love is as necessary for the heart as food and water are for the body. When trials are difficult, we often become discouraged and broken. In such times, love and encouragement are necessities. Without them, it's hard to go on day after day. God knows this and never forsakes us. He always loves us and will cherish us in our brokenness. God is always there, even when we don't feel Him. He is always there, holding us through it all.

When parents decide to have children, they decide to bring someone into their life with whom to have a relationship. God decided that He wanted a relationship with you, and thus He made you, His precious baby.

Would a mother forsake her own nursing baby? Neither will God forsake you. Though salvation from your circumstances may tarry, be patient because in God's perfect timing, He will save you. Jesus has always desired to save you from all trials and suffering, and He gave His life to accomplish that. He loves you!

And He will continue to prove Himself faithful. All you need to do is wait patiently in faith while He holds you through it all. Even though it may take a long time, as it did for Job, God will give you a blessing, which will be greater than anything you had before your trial. If this is not true of what you have currently been given, then God hasn't finished blessing you. As it is written,

"For I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you and

confirm My covenant with you. You shall eat the old harvest, and clear out the old because of the new.” Leviticus 26:9–10

Sometimes we suffer a trial because God is just clearing out the old blessing to fill us with a new one. In the case of this scripture, God is speaking a spiritual parable about clearing out the old law to make way for the newness of the Spirit. However, this statement is also literal. God clears out the old blessing to make way for newer and better ones.

So be patient when you’re suffering. Know that God does not desire to see you hurt. Rather, He is using your circumstances to teach you self-discipline in a relationship with Him, that you may draw closer to Him all day, every day. And He is removing old blessing to bring in new.

Therefore, if you are currently enjoying a blessing, know that you may have to lose something in order to gain more blessings. If you want more food in your fridge, you’ll have to clear out the old to make way for the new. If you want the blessing of eternal life, you’ll have to lose your life.

Now, not every trial is like this. When you lose a loved one, to think that God is merely cleaning out the old would be abominable. While He may use the opportunity to purge your heart of many impurities, such a trial is nonetheless different.

Yet God will still use every evil circumstance to create good for you. Eric struggled with accepting this when his daughter died. He thought the scripture was saying, “Your bad circumstances are simply good in disguise.” So he was angry, thinking that there was nothing good about the way his daughter died. And he was right in that there was nothing good about it, but wrong about his interpretation of the scripture.

It isn’t that anything good comes from the death of someone you love. Rather, it’s that God is so powerful and so loving that He is able to make your life good again. God is able to make good things happen in the midst of your pain as you learn to rest your heart in Him. Through your suffering, He will teach you how to rely on Him, and this will create a sense of nearness to Him that you never had before.

No matter what happens, God will hold you through it all. But He can’t do this if you’re not willing to be held by Him. Therefore, learn to sit in His presence daily. Find comfort as often as possible in His presence. Then, when you are done with your devotion, don’t exit His presence to continue your day. Rather,

take Him with you by constantly meditating on Him. He comes with you when you leave the secret place. He never leaves you nor forsakes you, especially not now that you're hurting. He could never leave you, for His love compels Him to stay. But much more than that, His love also compels Him to comfort you.

However, if you don't pay attention to His presence and His voice, you'll never hear those soothing whispers of love that elevate your heart. So focus on Him and give Him your attention all day, constantly. Learn to abide in Him even as He constantly abides in you. His mind never departs from you to think of idle things. Likewise, do not allow your mind to be carried off in idleness, but learn to love God with all of your mind, as you are commanded. Rest in Him by speaking to Him constantly, all day, through prayer. As it is written,

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving..."
Colossians 4:2

By seeking Him, you will find His comfort. If you want your Daddy to hold you, then climb in His lap so He can. But if you run away and hide in your sorrow, how can you be comforted? So take time to spend with Him. Be alone with Him and rest in His arms. Let His love cover you, and allow His Spirit to free you.

Be alone with God and release the issues of your heart to Him. He loves you and cares for you, so share your heart with Him. Let Him lift you up and give you joy in the most impossible moments. He is able to do this if you're willing to let Him.

But unless you seek Him, He can't hold you. You have to let Him do this, and receiving His comfort is a choice of your heart. He is a relational God who calls you to seek Him. He has already stretched His hand out to you; now you need to stretch yours back to Him.

No matter how much it feels as if He isn't there, He has never left you. He has been waiting right by your side. No matter how much it feels as if He doesn't hear your prayers, He has heard them perfectly and has counted every tear you've shed during them.

So Beloved, don't weep alone. Let God hold you. He is standing next to you, so throw yourself into His arms! Cry in them, and He will comfort you. But if you refuse to seek Him, then you're in sin. We are called to seek the Lord always in everything. Even as it is written,

"Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His face evermore!" Psalm 105:4

Therefore, always seek God. When life is good, seek God and rejoice in Him! When life is bad, seek God and rejoice in Him! His Spirit will comfort you, and His joy will strengthen you. If we don't seek God, then how are we loving Him more than we love ourselves? If we would rather focus on our situation and push Him out, then we're being selfish. He made you in order to love you and save you. On the day Adam and Eve sinned, and thereby separated all humanity from God, a piece of His heart died.

In the end, He decided that it would be better to be hated, spat on, tortured, scourged almost to death, otherwise treated brutally, and then murdered on a cross than to spend another moment without you. If He has loved you so much, that He would die to be nearer to you, then how do you think He feels when you push Him away?

God cares about everything you go through. He loves you with all of His heart! Before time began, He knew what would happen to you. He knew every circumstance that will come upon your life. He knew how you would respond to life and how it would respond to you. He has been waiting for thousands of years, since before creation, for these things to happen. He has known what would happen and has patiently waited to hold you through it all.

It has been in His heart all this time to comfort you. He has been waiting for millennia to love you, cherish you, comfort you, and embrace you. He loves you with an unrelenting, passionate, and eternal love. His love is the rock on which we stand. Remember this when darkness covers you and makes your vision fade, for His love is a fire that lights your way. When you are broken, turn to God, and His love will become a river of joy flowing from your heart.

God will always cherish you, and nothing will ever change His heart toward you. Nothing will ever separate you from His love. God would pass through heaven and earth, forcing all obstacles out of His way, just for a moment with you. And He proved that the day He died on a cross for you.

God Allows All Things Because He Loves Us

Why does God allow bad things to happen in the first place? What's His plan? What is He trying to accomplish?

God does all things out of love, and there is nothing He brings upon you that hasn't been built within the framework of love. Now, not every trial is God's desire for you. Sometimes people do evil things to each other. Yet if we are good to follow His Holy Spirit rather than pave our own path in life, we will abide under the protection of His wing. Though sometimes people are wicked, God will save you if you continue earnestly in His Spirit.

The Lord, with careful consideration and much forethought, decided to permit bad circumstances for a greater good. For those who don't have Christ, there is no greater good that comes out of the bad things in life. If they don't find Christ, then nothing eternally good comes from painful circumstances; they only suffer.

But for those who are the children of God, everything has purpose for greater good. Even as it is written,

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28

We know this, but it can be a hard thing to remember during a painful experience. What good could come from cancer? What good could possibly come from the loss of a loved one? What good can come from the loss of a young child? The loss itself isn't good, but what God chooses to do with the circumstances is good.

Remember that God will restore you when you stand before Him. Remember that He lost His son to gain you. Then, in the end, He raised His son, and He will raise you as well. He gained you and received back His firstborn, whom He had lost. Likewise, if you've lost a loved one, you will gain back what you lost even as God has regained all He lost.

We all have mountains and valleys in life; even God has experienced this. When He lost humanity to sin and death, His heart sank. His relationship with Israel, in particular, has been an emotional rollercoaster for God—just read the Old Testament.

His mountain is in heaven. Then Jesus stepped into the valley when He was born here. Yet Jesus received His throne when He ascended to heaven. It was His

before He came down to us, and He reclaimed what belonged to Him in the end.

From the time He was a baby, however, His life was terrible. Upon Jesus' birth, Herod sent Him running for His life. Joseph and Mary had to hide in Egypt to keep Him safe. His family didn't have the chance to go home and gather any belongings. They had to leave everything behind and flee immediately, lest He be killed.

Later in His ministry, He was often deprived of sleep. He dealt with faithless people and was persecuted constantly. He was derided, hated, mocked, and left hungry and homeless. There He was, the King of kings and Lord of lords—His Majesty, God of the universe—sleeping homeless and hungry in a field. What did He do when it rained? While it is rare, sometimes it snows in Israel in the winter. Jesus wasn't always invited into a home. Sometimes He had to withdraw from the city and hide in the wilderness because He drew such large crowds. So what would He do on the cold winter nights?

His life was the furthest thing from good. He was a king who didn't even possess an ounce of gold. Then, after all His suffering in poverty, He was tortured and murdered. Yet He had peace because He spent His time walking in the Holy Spirit and meditating on the will of the Father. And if we do likewise, we also will have the peace of God.

Moreover, after His trials, God was blessed in receiving His throne, spiritual body, and child back. While He had a spiritual body before He came down (His body was called "the Angel of the Lord" at various points in the Old Testament), and while He had His throne, what He truly gained from all His suffering was you.

So God laid down His previous blessing of being the God of heaven to take up the greater blessing of having you, while still being God. We likewise will gain a greater blessing at the end of our trials, than we had beforehand. While this may not always seem to be the case immediately, if you wait patiently, sometimes for years afterward, you'll see the end God had in mind.

Job was rich and lost everything. After his experience, however, he gained double his previous blessing. He laid down an old blessing to pick up a new and better one.

God has an end in mind when He allows us to suffer—an end that includes perfect peace with joy. He wouldn't let us suffer unless He knew that the end result would be better than the means to get there.

God gives us trials in order to teach us to live according to His word. But trials can lead us to fear, and those who fear aren't walking by faith. From where does faith come? From His word! So seek His word, that you can live by faith and have victory over your trials. As it is written,

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” 1 John 5:4

Remember that if God never spoke, you wouldn't have life. As water and food are necessary for the body, even so the word of God is necessary for the soul. We must live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and honor Him in every action we take. We must be obedient to His every word and express His love in everything we do. Faith comes by His word, and righteousness is faith in motion. True righteousness is obedience to His word. Hence, God allows us to suffer trials so that we can learn to rely on His word. As it is written,

“So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” Deuteronomy 8:3

God leads us through the words of His mouth, which include more than only the Bible. While the Bible is extremely important for the believer's walk, we also must listen to the Holy Spirit as He interprets the Bible to us. He shows us on a daily basis how to practice the written word. So when you submit to the oral word of God, which is the voice of the Holy Spirit, you are also submitting to the written word. Why? Because He will not tell you to do things that will contradict the Bible.

We are led to eternal life by the Spirit, and without Him we are not saved. Just having the Holy Spirit isn't enough, however; we must obey the Spirit as well. As it is written,

“Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him. But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.” Exodus 23:20–22

In this scripture, the Angel who went before Israel was God. For this reason, Joshua later bowed to worship Him on the plain by Jericho.

So God allows our trials in order to teach us obedience to His voice and test our

obedience. The Father did this with Jesus, too. As we read,

“So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’ As He also says in another place: ‘You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek’; who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” Hebrews 5:5–8

Even as the Father allowed Jesus to suffer, that He might learn obedience, so He permits us to suffer, that we likewise can obey Him. He gives us our trials for the sake of eternal life, so that He may bring about a greater good for us from the circumstance.

God does all things out of love. Within the framework of love, He built you; with love in mind, He allows your heart to be sweetly and gently broken.

When a bone is broken, it heals stronger than it was before. God allows your heart to be broken at its weak points so that, when it heals, it may be stronger. God permits your heart to break so that, in these weak places, you’ll learn to make Christ your strength. Then you’ll never break again.

Therefore, Beloved, rejoice in the love of God. Everything He does is for love’s sake. Remember this truth and walk in it. Learn to rejoice in the midst of your trials. Suffering has its place, but in every place we should put on the joy of the Lord. So turn your hurting into rejoicing! Overcome pain with praise. Worship God, and His Spirit will heal your heart. Remember that He loves you and learn to respond rightly to His love.

Remaining Faithful and Being Strengthened by Him

God has always loved you. He has always remained faithful to you. In every trial you have ever experienced, He has always been there, not only to hold you but also to carry you through it all. No matter what you're going through, God is still good.

Can you believe this? Can you practice your belief? Will you be like Job, who fell on his knees and worshipped God, accepting the bad with the good?

During hardship, Satan tempts us to be angry and impatient with God. Rather than learning the lesson at hand, we are tempted to forsake Him or to bring harm on ourselves or others. If we're too wrapped up in our pain, not releasing it to God and focusing on the lesson at hand, then we will never learn what God is teaching us. Pay attention so that you don't have to relearn old lessons. If you don't learn, sometimes God will allow another trial later to teach you the lesson you missed. I've personally found that, sometimes, the faster I learn the lesson, the sooner my trial is over.

Obviously, this isn't the case for every trial, and not every trial is for the purpose of learning. Some trials come from other's sins for example. But there is always something God can teach you through your suffering.

If brethren have sinned against us, Satan will tempt us to be divided from our brethren so that, when we're secluded in our wrath and brokenness, he may tempt us into our own sins. But Beloved, do not take your frustrations out on God or your brethren but, rather, remain unified in His Spirit and glorify God in your conduct. Rebuke those who have sinned and embrace those who repent. If they refuse, don't disassociate yourself from all fellowship because of that one person.

It can be difficult to find a place of peace in the middle of a storm. It can be hard to maintain rational thought in deep brokenness. When it's difficult to think rationally, we're more likely to hurt ourselves or others in the heat of the moment.

Yet brokenness is the perfect time to draw near to the Lord. When we can no longer think rationally because of deep hurt, a door opens to let God do the thinking for us. He should always be doing the thinking for us, anyway, because we should always be living according to the mind of Christ.

But the only way to do this is to remain faithful to follow Him and lean on His

love. Let Him comfort you and cherish you. Meet with Him in the secret place constantly while you suffer. You need to be with Him in the secret place because your heart is distracted with sorrow. It is easier to be distracted by other things around you when you're distracted in your heart. The outward distractions have more strength to keep us from meditating on Christ when the inward distractions are screaming loudly.

So find a place of peace and sit in His love. Remove the distractions from around you and go to the one who loves you most. He will comfort you, cherish you, and nurture your heart back to joy. He is always good and will carry you through every storm of life.

After we have suffered a while, so that our faith may be proven to be more precious than gold refined by the fire, He restores us and delivers us according to His faithfulness and loving-kindness. Remember this and walk in faith, and in the meantime pray for wisdom.

Pray that God will make sense of your trials. If He wants you to learn a lesson through them, it would be wise to ask Him to convey that message to you. It would be good to pray for understanding, that you can grow and remain pleasing to Him.

One way in which we should always please Him is by having blind faith. If the darkness has surrounded you and you don't know the way out, take the time to thank God. Thank Him for every opportunity to have blind faith. Before you see the way out, thank Him through faith that He will save you and restore in His own time—remembering, of course, that restoration can take years.

Let God refine you through trials, and be grateful for the work He is doing. Learn to rejoice and thank Him in every situation of life. As it is written,

“...pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17–18

I'm not saying to pray, “Thank you, God that I lost my job, and my home as a result. And thank you that I had that flat tire after hitting the curb so that now I have no transportation to find a job. Oh, and before I forget, thank you for the bed bugs with which I have been so blessed in the homeless shelter.” (This prayer describes an actual trial suffered by someone I knew.)

The point of the scripture is that there is always a reason to rejoice and something you can find for which to be grateful, no matter the circumstances of life. As an old saying goes, “I was so poor that I cried because I had no shoes.

Then I met a man who had no feet.”

Let this mind be in you as it was in Christ Jesus—that in His suffering, during the life of His ministry, He worshipped the Father. When He slept in the wilderness, He found comfort by withdrawing to pray and be intimate with the Father. Though He was hungry, poor, and often persecuted, He rejoiced always. This characteristic we see in Paul also. As it is written regarding the suffering of Paul,

“To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.”
1 Corinthians 4:11–13

And also,

“Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.” 2 Corinthians 11:22–28

But in all of Paul’s suffering, he rejoiced and worshipped God. Hence, we also read,

“Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:13–19

And we read further,

“Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.” Philippians 2:17–18

This is a hard thing to learn and even more difficult to practice. But God calls us to have such a heart, that we should rejoice in Jesus always.

Sometimes God will use our trials to encourage countless others in the faith. Paul likens it to being crucified for the brethren. So Beloved, carry your cross, and God will raise you up.

The Lord uses our trials not only to encourage others around us but also to sharpen us in the faith. That He uses it to refine our faith is evident, for it is written,

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” 1 Peter 1:6–7

And that we are called to rejoice in trials is also evident. For it is also written,

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” 1 Peter 4:12–13

James also exhorts us that we should be patient in all things. But when we're in a trial, it isn't the trial with which we're being patient. Rather, we must be patient with God while we wait for Him to save us. And we must learn such patience toward Him. We are His servants, and He bought us at a price. Our lives are not our own, and we ought to remain faithful to our Lord and Master.

He does cherish you and will give you what you need, even when you don't think or feel you need it. Though not always, we sometimes need a trial to grow. Sometimes, too, we need a trial in order for someone around us to find Christ. Remember that Jesus suffered the trial of the cross, and through it you were saved. In this we are becoming like Christ, as we learn to carry our own crosses.

However, it pains Him to watch you hurt, so it is a sacrifice for Him to watch you suffer. Yet He gives you what is best for your growth because He is always faithful to love you and to provide you whatever is necessary for eternal life.

He will give you what you need to grow in Him, in order to secure and continually cement your salvation. He will give you peace in time to come, but only when it is most appropriate for your faith. Learn whatever lesson He has to teach you so that you can move on from this trial and into the place of peace.

But in the meantime, as you suffer, lean on Christ. Let Him hold you and strengthen you. Not everything is in our control, although we would like it to be. Yet everything is in His control, and He always knows what's best. God will carry you through your trial, but pray for strength while you're in the midst of it.

Yet don't only pray for strength to make it through the trial; pray also for strength to rejoice in the meantime. Pray for strength to worship Him and to glorify His name. He is deserving of this, as He has gone before you to suffer all things for your sake.

Therefore, Beloved, as you partake in the cross with your Savior, remain faithful to Him and let Him strengthen you in His love. He knows what you're going through! He suffered it two thousand years ago. He knows your pain and understands it perfectly, yet He does call you to rejoice in Him. This is why is written to "count it all joy" when we fall into trials. Though this is easier said than done, His Spirit will lift up our hearts as we grow in Him, and we'll rejoice even in the most impossible situations.

Jesus likewise counted it as joy to face the cross. He despised the shame but knew that what He would gain from the cross was greater than the cross itself. And what did He gain? You. He counted you to be greater than His suffering. How much more should we count Him worth suffering for?

It's obvious that He didn't want to endure the cross, hence His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. Who would *want* to suffer? The very thought of it made Him sweat blood, but He persisted in faithfulness. It wasn't that He wanted to suffer but that He desired the gift of God that would come afterward. We likewise receive a reward when we suffer. Through suffering, we find comfort in the middle of trial and a better relationship with the Lord in the end.

That Jesus had joy when approaching the cross was evident. As it is written,

"...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

“You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by him, for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.’

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

“But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.” Hebrews 12:2-8

Yet is every trial for chastening? Yes and no. As we discussed before, not all discipline is laid upon us because we sinned, but for the sake of growth. In this we learn to be self-disciplined, by submitting to the discipline of the Father. Likewise, Jesus had not committed any sin when He endured the cross.

However, the scripture to which we referred discusses chastening. Why would Jesus be chastened over sin if He had not committed any? Because for the sake of all, He embraced the discipline of the cross. Similarly, for the sake of love, God calls you to carry your cross.

For our sin we deserve wrath, but instead we have mercy. That’s actually unfair! We deserve condemnation but receive love and a blessing. And that’s the beauty of grace: It makes life unfair. This type of unfairness leads us to rejoice because, through His grace, we find salvation.

We were given an opportunity for repentance, an opportunity we didn’t deserve. Christians are always getting what they don’t deserve—God’s grace. Why then would we be so upset if we receive some bad things we don’t deserve? Doesn’t good triumph over evil? Won’t good overcome hardship? Beloved, in due time it will, for your Lord will comfort you.

Yet remember that God cannot be where sin is. The two collide, resulting in the death of the sin. Remember also that sin exists in this world. When Jesus walked the dust of the streets, He healed everyone who touched Him. He restored anyone who asked for it. He loved us and built us up in truth.

But when He departed, where did the healing go? Some who ask for it receive it, but not everyone. If everyone did, then why do some Christians still die of cancer? When God is here, this world is blessed and He restores this world. But when He leaves, brokenness ensues and takes over.

The Spirit of God is here on this earth, but God's throne is not yet with men. When it is, He will destroy every worker of iniquity who has not sought out His mercy. When He returns, God will collide with sin, resulting in its death. His blood will cover those who sought it, but those who haven't will find His wrath.

In that day, those who have loved Him will be healed. He will restore the broken, who have covered themselves with the blood of Christ, and will comfort them. He will wipe their tears away and bless them with an abundance of peace—a peace that shall never be taken away, just as assuredly as His love will never be revoked.

Remain faithful to Him, carry your cross, and let Him strengthen you in His love. He has gone before you, and He will hold you through it all. If you sit in His love, you will be strengthened by His Spirit.

Take the time to come out from the distractions around you and release your heart to God in the secret place. He will strengthen you during these times. If you feel as if you need more strength to make it through, then seek Him more frequently in the secret place. You will find that God will give you exceedingly and abundantly, above what you ask or think. He will not just give you strength to make it through, but strength to rejoice in Him and in His faithfulness.

*I Know That God Is Good but Why Am I Hurting So
Much?*

I Know that God Is Good But Why Am I Hurting So Much?™

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Introduction

This book was written for Christians who deeply love the Lord. It was not written for those who have never committed themselves to Him in an intimate relationship, but for those who have devoted their life to Him.

It was written for those Christian who are struggling with trials, or have had tragic circumstances overtake their life. Circumstances that would leave a person wondering, “God, how could you let this happen?”

We will explain God’s intentions as we explore the depths of His love, grace, and sovereignty.

God Created You To Love You

You are a special and precious creation of God. You are treasured by your Maker and cherished. Thousands of years before you were formed in your mother's womb He formed you in the thoughts of His heart. Before creation ever existed He entertained His mind with you. He imagined what life would be like to be with you, and how He would interact with you.

He thought of who you would be, what you would look like, what your personality would be like, how you would respond to life, and how life would respond to you. He took great pleasure in the thought of you, so He set out to create heaven and earth. A place to meet with His special friend –you.

You are loved more than you could ever imagine. And you have been loved since before God created time! God created you to be His special child and you have meant everything to Him. He has changed the seasons and the times for thousands of years since creation for your sake. He has risen nation upon nation, king upon king, to create the perfect circumstances for you to find Him as Savior.

He has caused all of the households and dwelling places to be in the places they are. He has moved the hearts of the people so that they would make the decisions they have made, to live where they live and do what they do in life. That way each person may have the greatest chance of groping after Him and finding salvation. Even as it is written,

“And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us” Act 17:26-27

In this God moved His pawns in place. He has been moving these pieces of the world for thousands of years to prepare the day of your birth. Then after you were born He has been preparing all things around you, having imagined how life would respond to you that He could give you exactly what you need to respond to the life that is found in Jesus Christ. In this you have found the love of God. In His love you have found a beautiful relationship. But in this relationship God is more than your beloved, He has also become your Father.

When parents decide to have children they decide to bring someone into their

life to have a relationship with. God decided that He wanted a relationship with you and thus made you his precious baby.

Although circumstances of life may not always be favorable toward us, God uses all things for the greater good. Because He is always good there is nothing that will come on your life that God won't turn into good. Even if you don't think good can come from it, if you let Him, God will turn every bad situation into something greater than you can imagine. Even as it is written,

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” Eph 3:20

God's love is faithful and He will do exceedingly abundantly above everything you can imagine to save you and bless you, because He loves you exceedingly abundantly above anything you can comprehend. You are worth everything to Him, and there's nothing He wouldn't give for you.

He proved this when He stepped down from His Lordly and Heavenly throne, and came down as a man to be rejected, hated, and homeless, living in the hills and the high country, starving and thirsty, hiding in the deserted places, preaching love and healing others, all while He waited to be betrayed in the day of His death.

He suffered the loss of all things long before the cross. He was hated, rejected, persecuted, hungry and homeless for years. Even at His birth as a young innocent baby He was hunted by Herod. But because of His passionate zeal for you He would have rather suffered homelessness on this earth, letting the rain cover His head at night, so that you could have a home with Him forever. Now think about it: Do you really honestly believe He was able to find a place to sleep every night? But even Jesus said,

“...Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” Mat 8:20

He chose to come down to this world knowing that He would suffer homelessness, rejection, and the loss of all things. He lived in the wilderness when traveling from city to city to preach His abundant love; all while He was rejected by His family, and lost His friends and some of His disciples. Even as the Scriptures say,

“...From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.” John 6:66

And that His family rejected Him is evident. As it is written,

“For even His brothers did not believe in Him.” John 7:5

With much forethought, He knew that if He came into this world He would suffer the loss of all things. He knew that He would be hated, despised, and rejected by His friends, His nation, and His family. He knew that coming to this earth would create many enemies and that it would lead to Him being crucified.

Yet He counted you as someone worth suffering for. You were worth it to Him, so He came and suffered for years for you. Not days, weeks, or months but years. He knew this would happen but He still counted you as someone worthwhile suffering for just to love you, save you, and have a relationship with you.

Then after He suffered for three years during His ministry, He went on to be rejected and murdered by His own people. By His sacrifice He has shown you that He would rather be mocked, hated, homeless, spit on, beat in the face, whipped, scourged, completely humiliated, stripped naked, and murdered on a cross than spend another moment in eternity without you.

You have meant so much to Him! He can't help the thought of being without you! He has loved you with an eternal love, and there is nothing in heaven and earth that could ever separate you from it. He would pass through heaven and earth, leap the highest mountain, plunge the deepest depth, fight the mightiest of beasts, risk His life and die just to save you.

Beloved why then would we question the goodness of God just because we suffer? He came to save you from the sufferings of this present life, to redeem you and restore you in the heavenly places. In the meantime, while we wait for His redemption with patience, we must suffer the things of this life with long forbearance knowing and believing that God is good.

He allows bad things to happen for good reasons. Reasons that build your character, and restore your heart and soul, though the circumstances may hurt. He is good and His love abounds forever. But to prove His love He has suffered for you. Is it too much to ask for that you should do the same for Him to prove your love for Him? Beloved, lay down this present life to pick up an eternally peaceful life with Christ.

He counted you as someone worth suffering for, and you also should count Him as someone worth suffering for. We don't always suffer due to persecution, but

when bad things happen because you're following Him, you're suffering for Him. Sometimes we have to follow God into the valley. Knowing then that you're following Him consider that He's gone into the place of brokenness before you. He has known what you would suffer, because He's gone before you in it.

He has known everything that you would go through and has long known how He would save you, restore you, and comfort you. You were in His mind before He came down, and you were in His heart while He was here. Even now you are His passionate focus as He sits at the right hand of God intervening for you.

Everything that God brings on you He brings on you for your good and not for harm. Although some things may hurt, He has promised to restore you with an eternal life of peace. He will restore you both in this life and in the next.

Remember that after Jesus suffered death He was raised immortal. Remember that after job lost everything He was given double. Consider that after Elijah suffered loneliness in persecution he cried out to God in his brokenness saying, "I alone am left, and they seek to take my life!"

Remember that immediately after this God gave Him Elisha as a permanent companion until the day he ascended into heaven. Remember that when he ascended, he was no longer alone, for fifty sons of the prophets followed him and witnessed his ascension.

God has always refreshed, healed, and restored His servants. Yet there will be a time and a place for us to go home to the Lord. We will no longer be healed in this life at that time, because God intends to heal us forever, and will take us home in peace. Even as it is written,

"The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; Merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." Isa 57:1-2

Beloved, God will deliver you in this life and abundantly bless you in the next. Although you suffer now, God will lift up your face and wipe every tear from your eyes. Even as He has promised,

"Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, Streaming to the goodness of the LORD for wheat and new wine and oil, for the young of the flock and the herd; their souls shall be like a well-watered

garden, and they shall sorrow no more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old, together; for I will turn their mourning to joy, Will comfort them, And make them rejoice rather than sorrow.” Jer 31:12-13

“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Rev 21:4

God has promised to comfort you. Be alone with the Lord in the secret place and He'll comfort you now. When you're hurting run into your Daddy's arms, not away from them. Remember that He'll allow your sufferings to continue for your growth, which is a greater good than redeeming you immediately. Although trails may hurt, when God brings them upon you it's for your growth. Now God doesn't bring every trial on you, but for those He does, He is seeking to grow you. There are some trials which we receive from circumstances outside of growth. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. Consider Job: He neither committed sin nor did anything deserving of his situation, but he suffered nonetheless.

Sometimes we suffer because of wicked people. God gives us perfect free will that we can either choose to love Him or not. But some people choose to use their free will for the wrong things. People will persecute you, take advantage of you, or hurt you without regard for your life. But God's love is above all these things and He will restore your heart. It's not His fault that people are wicked. Although He can stop all things, He has permitted men to do good or evil during this era. Then when He returns He has promised peace for those who have loved the Lord.

In that time He will stop wicked people from doing hurtful things. He will restore what has been lost, build up what's been broken down, and heal what was hurt. Even now God intends to restore you in His love. But don't blame Him when evil people do hurtful things. It's their fault and they should be blamed, not God.

Yet remember that you also were once wicked to the Lord, and His son was crucified because of you. Yet He loved you and forgave you. If anyone has hurt you, go and do likewise. Forgive the unforgivable, and love the unlovable. In this you may find the impossible happening: a sinner may repent and find Jesus Christ, being broken by His loving-kindness at work in you. For it is the loving-kindness of Christ which has led us to repentance. Go show your enemies the

same and you'll be blessed.

But no matter your circumstances God will use them for good. He is so powerful, so good, and so loving that He can turn any circumstance into an opportunity for good. He will use everything that happens to you for your good and for your growth. So keep your heart open to Him when you're suffering, and pray for wisdom. He will use the situation for good, to show you something you've never known, and to restore you.

But there are times that God will give us trials for our growth. He will humble us through circumstances that we can learn obedience from the things we suffer. Even as Jesus learned obedience from the things He suffered. As we read,

“though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” Heb 5:8

Pruning isn't pleasant to a plant. If it had any sense of feeling it would be excruciating getting its limbs cut off. But in the end it bears much more fruit and is a far more profitable plant. Not all discipline is given to us because we've done something wrong. Sometimes discipline is given to us merely for growth, that we may bear the fruit of righteousness. It's given to us that we would learn and understand how to be self-disciplined. Nevertheless whether due to sin or for growth no chastisement seems joyful, but rather painful. Yet remember that in His discipline God is preparing you for eternal redemption. Even as it is written,

“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Heb 12:11

God doesn't bring anything on us for our harm, but for our good. We learn through suffering to depend on Jesus, and to be strengthened by Him. It causes us to draw nearer to Him, and thus increases our relationship with Him. It is through the bonds of love that we overcome the burdens of life. God through love shall rescue us from every burden of life. But in the meantime we are called to lean on Him for strength as He holds us through it all.

When life presses you down remember that you weren't created for adversity. You were created for love. You were created for an eternally peaceful relationship with Jesus Christ. Remember this and walk in love toward your Savior. When life is hard don't question God, and don't blame Him. Press into Jesus and He'll comfort you. Satan would have you sit alone in brokenness but God would have you climb into His arms and be held.

God Holds You Through It All

No matter what God is always there for you. He hasn't gone through what He's gone through just to abandon you in the midst of your needs. God takes care of all of your daily needs even as you are called to pray for your "daily bread."

Love is as necessary for the heart as food and water are for the body. When trials are difficult, we often become discouraged and broken. In this time, love and encouragement are necessities. Without them it's hard to go on day after day. God knows this and never forsakes us. He always loves us and will cherish us in our brokenness. God is always there even when we don't feel Him. He's always there, holding us through it all.

But love doesn't always look like what we want it to. Sometimes we suffer trials not for growth but for sin. When people walk in sin God gives them what is necessary to turn their lives back around. Always examine your own heart. If you're suffering a trial come before the Lord and ask if there's anything you've done wrong.

Think of any sins you may have been walking in lately and if there are any consider that God may be disciplining you for repentance sake. When God's children walk in a pattern of sin He chastises them for repentance. In this case He doesn't hold us through our suffering until we first repent. But He gives us the suffering that we might learn repentance and to walk according to a pattern of righteousness. But when we repent God is waiting eagerly by our side to hold us again.

Consider Jonah. He didn't want to go to Nineveh but resisted God. So God sent a heavy storm on him while he sought to flee the Lord. It was at that point that he threw himself in the sea, to deliver the people in the vessel. Then God caused him to be swallowed up by a fish where he suffered for three days.

Then when he repented, God commanded the fish to spit them out on dry land. It wasn't until he repented that he was relieved from his suffering. He knew to follow the Lord, but chose his own heart and was rebuked by God. Even as Jonah himself said,

“...‘Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me.’”
Jon 1:12

But that God has mercy after repentance is evident for after Jonah prayed, God relented in His wrath. As we read,

“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. And he said: ‘I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice. For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.

Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.' The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went up to You, Into Your holy temple. Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy. But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.’

So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.”
Jon 2:1-10

After he repented God forgave him. But in forgiveness God commanded Jonah to follow through with faithfulness. True repentance suggests that we won't only sorry for what we've done, but that we'll make the necessary effort to do rightly again. Jonah still had to do what he formerly did not want to do. Therefore beloved, it is better to do the right thing from the beginning. Take it to heart and always examine yourself to know whether you're walking uprightly or not. If we don't humble ourselves to admit our faults God will rebuke us for repentance sake. Yet God does all these things out of love for mercy's sake.

Look also at Nineveh itself. They worshipped foreign gods, and were wicked before the Lord. Under threat of destruction God sent Jonah for their salvation. When Jonah warned them to repent, they did, and God forgave them and relented from harm. If they did not repent God would have assuredly destroy them as He said. God cannot lie and He said would have destroyed them.

Therefore beloved when something bad comes upon you, search your heart first. God is a God of mercy, and brings these things for mercy's sake. But if you don't repent God will follow through with His word. We read that He chastises

us, and the Lord will not relent unless we repent.

So when a trial comes, first pray and ask the Lord if there is anything that you have done wrong. Pray that He'll open your eyes and reveal truth to you. Then if something comes to mind, repent immediately. But if not, then sometimes bad things happen to good people. Yet God uses these things to grow His children.

No matter what happens God will hold you through it all. But if you're being disciplined for sin He won't hold you unless you repent. But if you search your heart before God and have a clean conscience then know that the Lord will use this situation for a greater good.

He will hold you through everything, if you're willing to run to Him. If you don't run to Him how can your Daddy embrace you in His arms? Take the time to spend with Him. Be alone with Him and rest in His arms. Let His love cover you and His Spirit release you.

Be alone with God and release the issues of your heart to Him. He loves you and cares for you, so share your heart with Him. Let Him lift you up and give you joy in the most impossible moments. He is able to do this if you're willing to let Him.

But unless you seek Him He can't hold you. You have to let Him hold you, and receiving His comfort is a choice of your heart. He is a relational God and calls you to seek Him. He has already stretched His hand out to you, now you need to stretch yours back to Him.

Seek Him and be blessed in His love. No matter how much it feels as if He isn't there, He never left you. He's been waiting right by your side. Beloved do not weep alone, but let God hold you. He's standing next to you. Throw yourself in His arms! Cry in them, and He'll comfort you! But if you refuse to seek Him then you're in sin. We are called to seek the Lord always in everything. Even as it is written,

“Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face evermore!” Psa 105:4

Always seek God. When life is good seek God and rejoice in Him! When life is bad, seek God and rejoice in Him! His Spirit will comfort you and His joy will strengthen you.

God cares about everything you go through. Before time began He knew what

would happen to you. He knew every circumstance that will come on your life. He knew how you would respond to life and how it would respond to you. He's been waiting for thousands of years since creation for these things to happen. He's known what would happen and has patiently waited to hold you through it all.

It's been in His heart to comfort you all this time. He's been waiting for thousands of years to love you, cherish you, comfort you, and embrace you. He loves you with an unrelenting, passionate, and eternal love. His love is the rock we stand on. Remember that when darkness covers you and makes your vision fade that His love is the fire that lights your way. When your broken turn to God and His love will be a river of joy flowing from your heart.

God will always cherish you and nothing will ever change His heart for you. Nothing will ever separate you from His love. God would pass through heaven and earth forcing all things out of His way just for a moment with you.

He loves you, and will never stop pursuing you. He's head over heels for you! You're His precious little baby and His special treasure. He'll always hold you, He'll never turn you away! Sometimes God will snatch you up in His arms to comfort you, and sometimes you need to seek Him and give Him your heart. But in all things learn to trust in Him.

Lean on Him and trust in His mighty hand. God will give you strength and will deliver you from everything that comes your way. When you received Him as your Lord and Savior, you did not receive Him to save you only once at judgment. When Christ became your Savior He became your salvation in everything.

God has promised to deliver you from the hardest circumstances and raise you up from the murkiest pits. There is nothing too difficult for Him, and He can bring salvation to you in a day. Therefore put your trust in Him, and lay your heart to rest in Him.

If salvation doesn't come in a day God has His reasons for it –reasons that could include your growth. But no matter what, believe He is good and be mindful of any lessons He may be trying to teach you through the circumstances. Let Him comfort and hold you. Run to Him and seek Him that He can grow you, treasure you, and deliver you from everything that comes your way.

God Does All Things Out Of Love

Now the question is why does God allow bad things to happen in the first place? What's His plan? What is He trying to do?

God does all things out of love, and there is nothing that He brings on you that hasn't been built with the framework of love. Now not every trial is God's desire for you. Sometimes people do evil things to each other. Yet if we are good to follow His Holy Spirit rather than paving our own path in life we will abide under the protection of His wing. Nevertheless sometimes people are wicked. In this God will save you if you continue earnestly in His Spirit.

God with careful consideration and much forethought decided to permit bad circumstances for a greater good. For those who don't have Christ there is no greater good that comes out of the bad things in life. If they don't find Christ there's nothing eternally good that comes from it, they only suffer.

But for those who are the children of God, everything has purpose for greater good. Even as it is written,

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Rom 8:28

We know this, but it can be a hard thing to realize during a painful experience. What good could come from cancer? What good could possibly come from the loss of a loved one? What good can come from the loss of a young child? The loss itself isn't good, but what God chooses to do with the circumstances is good. But remember that God will restore you when you stand before Him. Remember that He lost His son to gain you. Then in the end He raised His son and likewise will raise you. He gained you, and received back His Firstborn Whom He lost.

I once knew of a family who lost their son to a drunk driver. Rather than being mad at God or at the young man who killed their child, they chose to forgive him and love him. Both the mother and father met with this young man on a consistent basis, and ministered to him in prison. They poured out the love of God on him and eventually he broke down and gave his life to Christ. He ended up becoming like family to them and by the time he left prison the young man who killed their son, had become their son.

This situation is the same as the Father endured. His Son was murdered on a

cross because of your sin, but in exchange for His Son He received you as His child. Beloved, this is the power of the love of God: forgiveness. No one can image how good can come from evil, but nothing is impossible for God.

It is impossible to imagine what kind of good could ever come out of losing your child. Under normal circumstances there is nothing good that can come from it. But God is so powerful, so wonderful, and so loving that He is willing and able to work it together for good.

Job experienced the loss of everything. He lost his livelihood, his wealth, all of his children in a day, and even his own wife in a manner of speaking. Although the Scriptures do not say that he lost his wife she cursed him and turned against him in his most painful moment of life. Rather than holding him, she became bitter and blamed him, wishing he would die. So in a manner of speaking he lost her also, because he lost her love.

Even his friends turned against him, and accused him of sin even though they couldn't figure out what his sin was. Rather than being comforted he was tormented. For all his torment, rather than comfort his friends gave him torture. Rather than love he received cursing and deeper brokenness. It was as if when he asked for a refreshing drink someone gave him gall to drink. Like Jesus on the cross, who said, "I thirst" and they gave Him a sponge full of vinegar.

In the end of all of Job's suffering God gave him double everything back. And he received child for child every one that he lost. Then he went on to live so long they saw four generations. Remember that His children were already old enough to live on their own when he lost them. Remember that he called himself one of the "aged" and one of the "elders" as he sat among his friends who ridiculed him. Yet God gave him so much life that he saw his great-great grandbabies.

Indeed God blessed Job! As we,

"And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before." Job 42:10

And through Job situation we see that God is compassionate. As we read,

"Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." Jas 5:11

God restored Job after he prayed for those who persecuted him in the worst

moments of his life. When Job ask God to forgive them and after he sacrificed for their sins God restored Job. Job acted like Jesus, in that he not only forgave his persecutors but sought to forgive them and sacrificed for them.

When you choose to give God the glory, and love and forgive all of those who hurt you bitterly in the midst of your deepest most horrible moments God refreshes you. It is refreshing to forgive someone, no matter how horrible they've been to you. No matter what you've done, or where you came from in life, God loved you and forgave you and also suffered for your sin.

When you can come to terms with forgiveness, with righteousness, love, and faith in a God who is always good, you'll find yourself being strengthened by Him in the most difficult moments of life. God doesn't allow bad things to happen to hurt you but He does use them for good; to give you eternal life and grow you.

I once knew of a woman who suffered an unthinkable tragedy. She was pregnant with a baby who was a few months from being born. The doctors took an ultrasound and found that the baby was not forming properly in her womb. The doctor pulled her aside and because they didn't know how to explain it to her, he told her bluntly, "I want you to take a picture of yourself with your belly because this is the last time that you're going to see your baby alive." She was astonished, but the doctor continued, "Your baby is forming in your womb without a brain."

The child only had a brain stem when it was forming in her womb. It is impossible for anyone to live with only that portion of the brain. At most an infant with a brain stem lives for a couple months outside the womb and then die. But even that's rare because they usually pass away at birth.

In the end she gave birth to a baby girl and asked God for a miracle. God answered her because that girl lived for nine years before she finally passed away. It was a miracle the doctors couldn't explain. The child should have died at a few months old, but managed to live for years.

Her girl lived, had joy, loved, and was a blessing to her mother. But on the ninth year she deteriorated and passed away. It was impossible for her to live past a few months old, but with God all things are possible. Her mother had hoped her daughter would live a full life, seeing that God created this miracle for her, but in the end she lost her. Rather than being mad at God for the whole situation, both of watching her baby suffer for nine years, then losing her child, she chose to rejoice.

She felt so blessed to have her child that long whereas most parents would be grieved that they lost a child. As her child was on her deathbed with tears in her eyes she said, "I believe my baby girl came into this world for the sake of love. Having her and serving her helped me understand love and the nature of it. God made my baby live for nine years. It was a miracle! God created my baby for love."

This woman didn't only have to deal with the death of her child. She suffered from the time of her pregnancy and for nine years after her baby's birth. She had to deal with the painful thought of her child dying in the womb. Then when it was born she had to deal with the worry that any moment her child will die. She held onto hope but her hope wasn't strong because it was impossible for her child to live.

While her girl was an infant she'd hold her baby and look into her eyes and say in her heart, "This is my last day with my baby." But those days turned into weeks and the weeks turned into years. God blessed her, but she still suffered.

She had to serve her child day after day. Her baby lived and had basic functions, and even mildly communicated. But she had to suffer watching her child struggle through life and with with mental disabilities.

Then when she had hope that her child would live against all odds, she had to watch her baby deteriorate back into the mental state she was born into. What little bit she had with her baby slipped from her fingers a little more day after day.

This woman didn't have to suffer losing her child once in death. She had to suffer losing her child every day. She thought she lost her in the womb. She thought she would lose her every day after her birth. Then when she had hope that her daughter would live she lost her again when her mind deteriorated beyond being able to communicate. She lost her little by little day after day, until her own baby couldn't remember her anymore. Then she finally lost her when she passed away.

But this woman didn't curse God. Instead she said, "God gave me this baby that I should understand the nature of God's love." She was glad she had the chance to love her baby, and she was glad that God taught her such a valuable lesson through having this child. She lost her beautiful girl, but she had the joy of knowing where her baby was going. From God she came to God she returned. She was also comforted knowing that one day she'd be with her baby again.

This woman had the right heart. God didn't have to give her the baby in the first place. It could've passed away in her womb. But God gave her this child and in the end she didn't curse God for her situation. She blessed Him and thanked Him.

We likewise ought to worship God on our knees through our most horrible trials. No matter how hard it is, no matter how difficult it is we should never curse God. Even Job fell on his face and worshipped the Lord after losing his children. God is always good no matter what and He gives us all things for love's sake. He does all things out of love, even when it doesn't make sense.

Even when it seems as if nothing good can come from the situation at all, God is still able to make good come from evil. Remember that God spoke into the darkness and created light. What would make you think He couldn't do the same for your situations in life?

God create the light in this dark world, and He create light in our evil hearts giving us salvation. His love can illuminate the darkness of any situation which overshadows you.

There is nothing too difficult or too hard for Him. He makes good come out of every trial. He turns every heart break, every tear, every broken moment, and every shattered life into beauty.

He works everything together for good even when it seems impossible. So in the end life isn't really about what happens to us, but how we take it. Are we trusting in the Lord or wavering at His promises? Are we dwelling on the negativity of life or releasing our hearts to God? Are we sitting in His presence and abiding in His Spirit to be comforted by Him, or are we hiding in a corner and ignoring God while we lick our wounds? Beloved life is 10% what happens to you, and 90% how you take it.

I once met a man who was an airline paramedic. His job was to attend to every emergency situation on the aircraft. There was a time that a woman brought her baby with her on a vacation. She was on the flight back when out of nowhere her baby's face turned blue. The child was unresponsive, and there was no apparent reason for the situation. It wasn't choking on anything it just turned blue. When this man inspected the child, he found that its heart had stopped.

He spent 45 minutes crying out to God trying to resuscitate the baby before he had to give up. Afterward he had to hand this broken woman her dead child and explain to her why he couldn't make her baby live.

Later that day he needed to go to the DMV. He was in a rush and didn't have time to change so he was still wearing his paramedic's uniform. While he was standing in line the woman serving at the counter had a horrible attitude. She was snappy with everyone, and had a short temper.

When he finally came up to her, she snapped at him for no reason. He had a simple question and she blew up and yelled at him. So he calmly said to her, "ma'am I'm a paramedic for the airline industry. I just got done trying to resuscitate a baby no more than 10 months old. Then after 45 minutes of struggling and begging God to make it live, it died. No matter how much I wanted to make this baby live there was nothing I could do. Then I had to be the one to explain its mother why I couldn't make her baby live. So how bad could your day really be? Come on! Tell me! How bad could it really be!? Do you really need to be treating people like this?"

This woman stared at him in awe, with tears streaming down her face. She didn't even say a word, and from that moment forward she was a lot nicer to everyone. Life really is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you take it. There are something that change us, like the loss of a limb. That would be the 10%. But how we use that to rest in God and glorify Him is the 90%.

Sometimes when bad things happen we let them get the best of us, and take it out on others. But when we do this it's like throwing pebbles in a still pond. Think about it for a moment: when the stone hits the water it makes a ripple.

Well that ripple is the negativity you had with that one person, and they'll give it to countless others around them. Like a stone thrown in a pond, the negativity will spread continuously outward beginning with that you who threw the first stone. In the end you didn't hurt the one person you took your frustrations out on, but countless people. But if you choose love and kindness even when you're hurting, the ripple will lead them to Christ. It will begin with you sharing the love of Christ and spread continuously outward. So what kind of a person do you want to be? One who grieves and takes their pain out on others? Or one who rests in Christ, is comforted by His love and goes forward to share that love with others?

Yet we tend to justify our unloving behaviors because we're broken. But love should lead us in everything! God brings everything upon us out of love with careful forethought for our growth. Be careful to be the example of Christ no matter what's happening to you. Love others unconditionally, and thank God for your circumstances, because they mean eternal life for you.

Thank Him also that these events will have their end and God will restore you completely when you stand before Him. Pray for wisdom and understanding that you may grow in what God gives you. Everything God gives you, He gives you that you may learn to trust in Him and lean on Him. Even as it is written,

“And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” Deu 8:2-3

Beloved your life and substance is wrapped up in the words of God’s mouth. He is God, who are we to question Him? If He says you must be poor, it’ll happen. If He says you’ll be rich it’ll happen. Whatever proceeds from His mouth happens.

Remember that when He created the heavens and the earth that He spoke to them and they formed whatever He desired. His power is in His word and remember that from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. His word proceeds from His love and there is no power like His love.

For by His love He has over turned that grave and changed the hearts of evil men. He has made their crooked ways straight, and change a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. Remember therefore beloved that you are God’s and your life consists of everything God says. Even as Jesus proclaimed,

“Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” Mat 4:3-4

Jesus was starving but didn’t seek to create His own miracle. Rather He waited on the Father to live according to His will. Whenever you fall into need, whenever something hard happens, God does these things that you should know that you live according to every word that proceeds from His mouth.

It’s not your choice to have what you want. It’s His choice to give you everything you have and to lead you to become everything you will become. When you suffer and see God’s hand save you, then you’ll understand that you have no

power to save yourself, but you are saved by the word and love of God in which you have faith.

The life of those around you are taken away, because God decided that. Our lives are wrapped up in His word whether He is our Lord or not. God chooses when we shall live, be born, and die. But that God has always had power over death is evident for we read,

“Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.” Gen 3:17-19

God gave us eternal life from the beginning but due to sin He took that away. He chose to take it, and it was always in His power to give life and take it away. Indeed God requires of our souls as we also read,

“But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’” Luk 12:20

One day God will speak and your life will be over. “Come home,” He’ll say and it’ll happen. Your very life exists because He spoke. Everything you have is given to you because God says it should be. Whatever providence you have first came from the mouth of God, and it was sent forth by Him to give you joy.

Remember also that God appoints our pains for our growth and edification. He uses them for His glory and brings a greater good from them even when we think it’s impossible. God allows your sufferings that you should know that you will live by every word of God. You live by God’s providence and all that you have is from Him.

If you’re struggling financially and if you feel that you need money, you’re wrong. You need God to provide for your needs not money. Beloved seek the Lord and He will save you, do not seek to save yourself with the things of this world. God will show you what you should do that you may find the perfect circumstance which will save you. If you need money and a job, God will lead to the job. Stop sending out a bunch of applications, and surrender it to God. Pray

that He'll lead you to the one He intended for you. God has your life planned and its best if you're humble yourself and surrender to that plan. But poverty leads us to fear, and those who fear aren't walking by faith. Where does faith come from? His word! So seek His word that you can live by faith and have victory over your trials. As it is written,

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” 1Jn 5:4

Remember that if God never spoke you wouldn't have life. As water and food are necessary for the body even so the word of God is necessary for the soul. We must live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, and honor Him in every action we take. We must be obedient to His every word, and express His love in everything we do. Faith comes by His word and righteousness is faith in motion. True righteousness is obedience to His word.

God gives us these things, to teach us to live according to His word. He gives us these things for the sake of eternal life that He may bring about a greater good for us. God does all things out of love. With the framework of love He built you. And with love in mind, He allows your heart to be sweetly and gently broken.

When a bone is broken it heals stronger. God allows your heart to be broken at its weak points that when it heals it may be stronger. God allows your heart to break so that in these weak places you'll learn to make Christ your strength. Then you'll never break again.

Therefore beloved, rejoice in the love of God. Everything He does is for love's sake. Learn to rejoice in the midst of your trials. Suffering has its place, but in every place we should put on the joy of the Lord. Beloved turn you're hurting into rejoicing. Overcome pain with praise. Worship God and His Spirit will heal your heart. Remember this and walk in it. Remember that He loves you, and learn to respond rightly to His love.

Responding Rightly To His Love

We understand that God loves us, but we don't always understand what His love looks like. In the Scriptures we read that God doesn't withhold any good thing from those who love Him. But what we consider to be good and what God considers good is different. If we always knew what was best then why would we need a councilor called the Holy Spirit?

Sometimes good can be hidden in the shadow of bad. Sometimes the trials of this life are blessings in disguise. God is willing to give us the hurt for a greater healing. If a trial weren't to produce something greater then God wouldn't give it. He's only interested in giving what's best for the growth of His children.

It takes this understanding to properly respond to His love. Seeing that His love may be disguised by a trial it can be difficult to respond to it appropriately. When something hard happens we tend to become broken, grieved, or angry. But as we discussed earlier we should rather rejoice knowing that hardship produces the fruits of the Spirit in us. These fruits are the first-fruits of eternal life. Therefore we should rejoice greatly knowing that His love is at work in us to save us.

When you lose a loved one, it may not seem like the love of God is working in your life. But we as naturally self-centered creatures only think about how God's works from our perspective. Since when was it all about ourselves? Can't God show love to those around us as well? He is showing the one who died His love, through giving them peace. Is He not showing love to a good person when they die? The Lord says 'Yes!' that it is a good thing. As it is written,

“The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; Merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.” Isa 57:1-2

Hence we have the saying, “Rest In Peace.” Everything God does is done love. Even when He takes us home, He's showing us love and delivering us from the evil of this world. He does it for peace, and we should have joy for others around us who have found that peace.

Seeing then that God gave them peace, we should have the heart to let them go. Yes we should be grieved, but beloved, let's grieve in God's arms. When hardship or pain come rushing in, rather than blaming God we should run

straight into His arms.

Even when the circumstances of life look terrible to us, God still uses all things for good. If there wasn't a greater good to be had through it, He wouldn't allow it to happen to His children. There is no good in the suffering itself, but there is good that can be brought about from it which is greater than the means to get there.

Therefore we should not only have a willing heart to suffer in Christ, but also a joyful heart in the sufferings of life. Rejoice in the Lord and know that He is good. His love endures forever, and his kindness to all generations.

He shall fill your heart with plenty, and cover you with joy. Peace shall be in your house, and the Lord shall walk in your midst. In due time you'll see Him face to face, and His glory will shine for all generations and forevermore.

Therefore beloved be patient, and wait for the faithfulness of the Lord. He will bring it in His due and proper time you will see it with your eyes and handle it with your hands. Be faithful to follow God in everything, but have patience with Him as you wait for your salvation.

Respond rightly to His love, and recognize His love at work in and around you. Pray for wisdom to recognize it and He'll give it to you. Ask Him to open your eyes to see His love working around you and He'll do it. This will build your faith and bless your heart as you begin to realize how much your Father adores you.

There is nothing God wouldn't give for you. Consider what He gave at the cross. Beloved, there is nothing He hasn't already given for you. Therefore, be submissive to Him, and allow His hands to form you. Though His fingers may sweetly break you, His hands will gently caress you and hold you through it all. He will comfort you as you grow in Him.

Then when you have grown, you'll find that some trials won't repeat themselves. When you grow in the lessons God is teaching you there will be no more reason for those learning lessons to happen. As a result you'll see trials less often and peace will begin to abound. Beloved Jesus didn't give His life to give you turmoil. He gave His life to save you and give you peace.

So give to Him what He gave for you. Give Him your life. Though there are sufferings in this life, when we're at home with Him He has promised us eternal peace. Even as nothing in heaven or earth can separate us from His love, even so nothing shall separate us from the peace He'll give us. Have faith, and He'll

strengthen your heart.

Never be angry with Him, but be patient with Him and wait for His timing. In everything God has determined good for you. Some trials we won't be saved from in this life, such as the loss of a loved one. But God will comfort us, and in time to come He'll turn these trials into rejoicing.

Remember this, and know that you're cherished, treasured, and set free by the love of God. He will save you from everything that comes your way. Only run now into your Daddy's arms and let Him hold you through it all. Let Him embrace you. Sit quietly in His presence as He softly comforts you in His love.

When you sit in His presence, and His spirit is upon you, His peace will overshadow you. His joy shall overtake you, and your heart which dripped brokenness will become a fountain of rejoicing.

The Holy Spirit is our fountain of joy, and His love is our encouragement. Surrender to Him and submit to Him. He knows what's best and only gives you what is best, even though it doesn't always look that way. He knows better than we do.

His eyes are above all things searching the good and evil. His gaze pierces through flesh and bone, through steel and stone. There is nothing He cannot see, whether past, present, or future God knows and sees all things. Therefore beloved He understands what you need and what those around you need. He will not withhold it from you but give you according to what is most important.

If ever you've suffered in poverty, know then that God was enriching your spirit. In such circumstances you must lean upon the Lord for strength. Do not run from God, and beloved do not fret it only causes harm. Rather walk in faith and the Lord your God shall save you even as He is promised. He will lead you to what you need. Listen carefully for His word and His Spirit will direct your steps.

But remember that His timing is almost never our timing. Yet His understanding is always above ours, and He will give you perfectly what you need. Not only for the here and now, but for the tomorrow and forever.

God counts your soul as more important than your flesh. Take it to heart and know that He is giving you eternal life. Though things may be hard, God speaks in love. Though life may be difficult, God will be there to comfort you.

God has known everything that would happen to you. He always knew what

would hurt you and has been waiting all this time by your side to comfort you. So just turn around and He'll be there, ready to love you and comfort you.

When something unexpectedly bad happens, do not hide from Him, and do not sit in fear. Rather beloved, rise up. Yes lift up your face, for your salvation draws near.

If we don't respond rightly to His love we'll never gain the lesson He's teaching us. We must lean on Him through every trial. It is through these trials that we learn to make God our strength.

In your weakness He is your strength, and your trials are your weaknesses. When He is your strength His glory rests upon you. He is glorified when you're humbled. He is honored when your life is humiliated. But He will lift up your face, for God honors those who honor Him. And if your life honors Him, then what shall He give to you? A reward no doubt. Therefore continue in faith and wait on His faithfulness.

When trials come, have faith that He'll save you. Then walk in love toward Him, and pray for wisdom in every circumstance. Pray that God will reveal His will in the situation. Pray that He will show you how to glorify Him in your hurting. Pray that He'll reveal any lessons He may be trying to show you through the situation.

Though pruning is not pleasant but painful it's the best method for producing the most fruit. Remember that God also prunes you that you should produce the fruit of eternal life through your tribulations. As the Scriptures say,

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—

always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” 2Co 4:7-8

Remember that the life of God is manifested in you when you're walking through a trial. Before Israel entered the Promised Land first they had a desert experience. They questioned God during this desert experience. But we should

respond rightly to His love knowing that everything is done for the sake of the greater good. Believe this and learn from the hand of God. He is having mercy on you even when you feel broken.

God will sweetly break you, but His hands will never crush you. His hands are for caressing, for cherishing, and holding you. God will refine you through fire, but He has promised that you'll never be burned. When the tribulation fire heats up the life of Christ is manifested in you.

The trials a Christian goes through lead them to life. But the trials the world goes through leaves them with nothing but brokenness. Their trials are worthless and meaningless. For they never grow in Christ nor find eternal life through them because they don't have God. But you have God, and He is your strength to live in death. Therefore when you're afflicted the glory of Christ is revealed. His life and the power of salvation is manifested through your hardships and the world sees it and stands in awe of God.

There have been times that I've gone through many trials. Yet God called me to rejoice in Him during them. When others who were of the world saw me rejoicing they asked me how I could possibly have joy. It open the door for sharing Christ and they were given the gospel. When the life of Christ is manifested in us, it brings the hope of salvation to others. Jesus Christ was crucified and it led to life for all who would believe in Him.

When we carry about the cross of Christ others are convicted and drawn to the love of God. In carrying our cross we shouldn't mope about in sorrow, but rejoice exceedingly. That way when they see the joy of God upon us they may wonder what we have that's so different and also find salvation.

Pray for wisdom in your circumstances. Pray for an open heart that God would teach you. Learn from the circumstances of life and carry the lessons with you always, that you may not have to relearn old lessons.

If we don't learn the lessons from the trials at hand, we may have to go through a similar trial again until we learn what God is teaching us. Therefore be diligent to learn it now that the days of rejoicing may come sooner.

Keep all things in prayer, and find support from your brethren. Sometimes we need the physical touch of Jesus. This we can find through our brethren as they portray the Lord in their actions.

God will work physically through your brethren, to comfort you, encourage you, and take care of you. You don't ever have to go through anything alone. You

have God, and you have your family in Christ. You are loved!

Seek the Lord and let Him lift you up. Submit to His love even when it hurts. Love Him back unconditionally and worship Him in the midst of suffering. He will cause you to rejoice again. Only wait on the Lord, and wait for His faithfulness.

Remaining Faithful And Being Strengthened By Him

God has always loved you. He has always remained faithful for you. In everything you have ever gone through He was always there not only to hold you but to carry you through it all. No matter what you're going through God is still good. Can you believe this? Can you still practice it? Will you be like Job who fell on his knees, and worshipped God accepting the bad with the good?

God has always been faithful and has never stop loving us. Everything He does is done through love. Knowing this we should also remain faithful. God deserves our devotion and has always loved us.

During hardship Satan steps in to tempt us against the Lord. He tempts us to be angry with God, to be impatient with Him. Rather than learning the lesson at hand we are tempted to forsake Him, or to bring harm on ourselves or others. Satan tempts us to be divided from our brethren, that when we're secluded in our wrath and brokenness he may tempt us into deeper sin. But beloved do not take your frustrations out on God or your brethren, yet remain unified in His Spirit and glorify God in your conduct.

It can be difficult to find a place of peace in the middle of a storm. It can be hard to have rational thought in deep brokenness. When it's difficult to think rationally then we're more likely to hurt ourselves or others in the heat of the moment.

Yet brokenness is the perfect time to draw near to the Lord. When we can no longer think rationally because of deep hurt it opens a door to let God do the thinking for us. He should always be doing the thinking for us anyway because we should always be living according to the mind of Christ.

But the only way to do it is to remain faithful to follow Him and lean on His love. Let Him comfort you and cherish you. Meet with Him in the secret place, constantly, while you suffer. You need to be with Him in the secret place because your heart is distracted with sorrow. It is so much easier to be distracted by other things around you when you're distracted in your heart. The outward distractions have more strength to keep us from meditating on Christ when the inward distractions are screaming so loudly.

So find a place of peace and sit in His love. Remove the distractions from around you and go to the One who loves you most. He will comfort you, cherish you, and nurture your heart back to joy. He is always good and will carry you through

every storm of life. When things get hard, life can feel as if we're floating on a raft in raging sea. But when the waves are tossing you remember this saying:

“God is my ship in a raging sea, He calms the storms inside of me. He carries me when I can't see. This is what it's like to be loved by His Majesty.

He'll hold me in His arms and He'll hold me tight. He'll be my light through the darkest night. When I'm hurt there's nothing left to fear, because the love of Christ is drawing near.”

God has always loved you and has always remained faithful to you. So remain faithful to Him. In trials and hardship our hearts are tested before God. Remember that we're called have unconditional love toward everyone. For some reason sometimes people forget this unconditional love also needs to be toward God.

Just because the winds of life aren't blowing favorably upon you doesn't mean that God stopped loving you and doesn't mean that we should stop loving God. When we question God we're not loving Him. He has never done anything wrong, and to question Him is to accuse Him in our hearts. Our love for Him must remain unconditional and our faith must remain unwavering.

God never stops loving you, continue in your faith and He'll deliver you. His timing is not the same as ours. After we have suffered a while that our faith may be proven to be more precious than gold which is refined by the fire, He restores us and delivers us according to His faithfulness and loving-kindness. Remember this and walk in faith, and in the meantime pray for wisdom.

Pray that God will make sense of your trials. If there is anything that He wants you to learn through them it would be good to ask Him to convey that message to you. It would be good to pray for understanding that you can grow and remain pleasing to Him.

We must love Him unconditionally. True unconditional love suggests that no matter what we go through we'll remain faithful to Him. Similar to the marriage vows, “for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, while forsaking all others until death makes you closer.” No matter what keep loving God and let nothing change your heart for Him. Keep believing and pray for strength. Pray for wisdom because trials are for our growth. Even as Peter said,

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” 1Pe 1:6-7

And also,

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” 1Pe 4:12-13

James also exhorts us, that we should be patient in all things. But when we're in a trial who is our patience with ultimately? God.

When things don't go our way we need to learn to be patient with God. We are His servants and He bought us at a price. Our lives are not our own and we ought to remain faithful to our Lord and Master.

He does cherish you, and will give you what you need even when you feel like you don't need it. Not always, but sometimes we need a trial to grow. Sometimes we need a trial for someone else around us to find Christ. Remember that Jesus suffered the trial of the cross and through it you were saved. In this we are becoming like Christ as we learn to carry our own crosses.

It hurts Him to watch you hurt, so it is a sacrifice for Him to watch you suffer. Yet He gives you what is best for your growth because He is always faithful to love you and give you the things that make for eternal life.

He will give you what you need to grow in Him to secure and continually cement your salvation. He will give you peace in time to come, but only when it is most appropriate for your faith. Learn whatever lesson He has to give, so you can move on from this trial and into the place of peace.

But in the meantime, while you suffer, lean on Christ. Let Him hold you and strengthen you. Not everything is in our control, although we would like it to be. Yet everything is in His control and He always knows what's best. God will carry you through it but pray for strength while you're in the midst of it.

Yet don't only pray for strength to make it through the trial, pray for strength to rejoice in the midst of it. Pray for strength to rejoice in Him and to glorify His name. He is deserving of it, and has gone before you to suffer all things for your sake.

Therefore beloved, as you partake in the cross with your Savior remain faithful to Him and let Him strengthen you in His love. He knows what you're going through! He suffered it 2000 years ago. He knows your pain and understands it perfectly. Yet He does call you to rejoice in Him.

This is why is written to "count it all joy" when we fall into trials. That is so much easier said than done, but as we grow in Him, His Spirit will lift up our hearts we'll rejoice even in the most impossible situations.

Jesus likewise counted it as joy to face the cross. He despised the shame, but knew that what He would gain from the cross was greater than the cross itself. And what did He gain? You. He counted you to be greater than His suffering. How much more should we count Him worth suffering for?

It's obvious that He didn't want to go through it, hence His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. Who would want to suffer? The very thought of it made Him sweat blood, but He persisted in faithfulness. It wasn't that He wanted to suffer, but desired the gift of God which came after it. We likewise receive a reward when we suffer. Through suffering we find comfort in the middle of it, and a better relationship with the Lord in the end.

But that Jesus had joy when approaching the cross was evident. As it is written,

"looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "my son do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by him, for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives"

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what

son is there whom a father does not chasten?

But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.” Heb 12:2-8

Yet is every trial for chastening? Yes and no. As we discussed before not all discipline is laid upon us because we sinned, but for the sake of growth. In this we learn to be self-disciplined by submitting to the discipline of the Father. Likewise Jesus didn’t commit any sin when He endured the cross.

Yet the Scripture we referred to goes on to discuss chastening. Why would Jesus be chastened over sin if He didn’t commit any? But for the sake of all we find the discipline of the cross. Likewise it is for the sake of love that God calls you to carry your cross.

Yet remember that not every trial is God’s discipline for you. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. Look at Job! There was no reason for his suffering. Satan inquired of the Lord, and God allowed Job’s suffering to test him.

But God also restored double to Job, and gave him children one child for each one lost. He also gave him long life, that he should see all these children to the fourth generation. But Job didn’t do anything deserving of a trial. That’s where Job’s friends were wrong. They thought bad things only happen to bad people, but that’s not the truth. They attacked Job in his innocence condemning a man who needed tender loving-kindness and comfort.

Suffering exists in this world because of sin. It’s not due to each individual’s sin that they suffer, but the fact that sin exists period. Although God disciplines us for sin, we don’t always receive what we deserve.

For our sin we deserve wrath, but instead we have mercy. That’s actually unfair! We deserve condemnation, but received love and a blessing. And that’s the beauty of grace! It’s makes life unfair. This type of unfairness leads us to rejoice, because through His grace we find salvation.

We were given an opportunity for repentance, an opportunity we didn’t deserve. Christian’s are always getting what they don’t deserve –God’s grace. Why then would we be so upset that we received some bad things we don’t deserve? Doesn’t good triumph over evil? Won’t good overcome hardship? Beloved, in due time it will, for your Lord will comfort you.

Yet remember that God cannot be where sin is. The two collide resulting in the death of the sin. Remember also that sin exists in this world. When Jesus walked the dust of the streets He healed everyone who touched Him. He restored anyone who asked for it. He loved us, and built us up in truth.

But when He departed where has the healing gone? Some who ask for it receive it, but not everyone. If everyone did then why do some Christians still die of cancer? When God is here this world is blessed, and He restores this world. But when He leaves brokenness ensues and takes over.

The Spirit of God is here on this earth, but God's throne is not yet with men. When it is He will destroy every worker of iniquity who has not sought out His mercy. When He returns God will collide with sin resulting in the death of it.

His blood will cover those who sought it, but those who haven't will find His wrath. But those who've loved Him will be healed.

He will restore the broken, who have covered themselves with the blood of Christ, and comfort them. He will wipe their tears away and bless them with an abundance of peace. A peace which shall never be taken away, just as assuredly as His love will never be taken away.

Remain faithful to Him, carry your cross and let Him strengthen you in His love. He has gone before you and He will hold you through it all. Sit in His love and you'll be strengthened by His spirit.

Take the time to come out from among the distractions around you and release your heart to God in the secret place. He'll strengthen you during these times. If you feel as if you need more strength to make it through, then seek Him more frequently in the secret place. You will find that God will give you exceedingly abundantly above what you ask or think. He will not just give you strength to make it through, but strength to rejoice in Him and in His faithfulness.

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About the Author

Adam is a preacher, teacher and #1 internationally bestselling author of over 100 books on the Christian faith. He is a devoted husband and father of three boys. Through his travels, he's seen the need for a new awakening and a new revival: a revival of the heart. Come join Adam on this journey of redemption and experience God like never before!

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