

# Dealing With Life's Pressures

How To Handle The Trials of life

1-10-10

**John 16:33 – I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world**

Life is hard

I have heard it said that we are always going into - in the midst of

Or coming out of trials

One of the promises Jesus left us

One we don't like to talk about too much or even think about too much

## Is that every one of us will have troubles

And considering how often we have troubles in this life

You would think that instead of avoiding talking about them

They would be a primary topic of conversation

During our Tuesday evening prayer meeting

Praying for someone going through a trial is our most frequent request

Illness family problems work stress finances

All show up on Tuesday night

If we were just to list the trials of those in our church

We would have to pray a long time before we got to the end of the list

When adversity strikes

Notice I said – when adversity strikes

Resulting in physical or emotional pain

What do you do – what do you think

How do you respond when adversity knocks on your door

When you experience pain or heartbreak or suffering hardship or any trial

When suffering doesn't make sense to you

How do you respond

We normally view adversity only as a negative

But often there is another side – a positive side

Adversity is a trial

From which you can take a great step forward in your spiritual growth

Or it is a defeat that can cause a greater gap in your relationship to God

Adversity is universal

In every nation on the face of this planet people are hurting

It doesn't make any difference who you are or what your status in life

Everybody hurts

And for some people it is almost too much to bear

REM wrote a song called Everybody Hurts

When the day is long, and the night, the night is yours alone

When you're sure you've had enough of this life, well hang on

Don't let yourself go, 'cause everybody cries and everybody hurts sometime

There are some people sitting near you

Who smiled and said hello – all the while they are carrying deep pain

We live on a fallen planet outside the Garden of Eden

We will all experience pain

That is what Jesus promised us – that is the experience of life

It is easy to look upon trials as unfair

Some of you are suffering right now and you're afraid

There are two questions that universally come out in suffering

## **The first question we all ask is – why**

God if you are the God of love and kindness

Why are you letting this happen to me

Now most Christians are made to feel guilty about asking why

But don't let that happen to you

## **First grace and guilt do not make good bedfellows**

Second you are not surprising God with your questions

Third there is something good about asking why

God has a goal for the suffering He allows into your life

And to never ask why may preclude you from knowing His purposes

In 2Cor Paul reveals that he had a thorn in the flesh  
We don't know what the thorn was  
But we do know it was painful and it was real  
The Greek word translated thorn is literally a pointed stake  
This pain was severe and most likely it was constant  
Three times Paul prayed for deliverance  
Three times God said no  
But God revealed to Paul the why of the thorn  
Because of the greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh  
How did Paul know the reason for the thorn – He asked  
Now some of us who live with adversity  
Will never know the answer to the question why – at least not in this life  
But in the midst of suffering if we never ask the question  
It increases the likelihood that we won't know  
And sometimes we need to know  
For God wants to use the problem to correct or change us  
Remember God's great purpose for you is to reflect the person of Jesus  
**So God is more interested in what you are becoming  
Than what you are feeling**  
God loves us enough that in order to keep us from destroying ourselves  
He allows pain and heartache into our lives  
That is what God did with Paul  
The one sin that haunted Paul's was almost certainly pride  
It was the common sin of the Pharisees and now  
Paul had seen and heard things like no other human being  
He was the apostle of apostles  
So to keep Paul useful God allowed a messenger of Satan to buffet him  
I am certain that at one time in my life  
God sent a very serious problem my way  
And He did it to keep me from going forward with sinful ambitions  
And had He in His mercy not done it – I wouldn't be ministering here today  
So God uses suffering to recreate the image of His Son in us  
God uses suffering to protect us from ourselves

And sometimes He tells us why the suffering – sometimes He just doesn't

## **The second question is who is responsible for our suffering**

There are three answers to that question

And the answer we like the least is – sometimes we bring it on ourselves

Numbers 32 – You have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out

Gal 6 - God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap

There are spiritual principles God has put in place

When we violate God then we receive the consequences

And there is nobody to blame but us

We will reap what we sow, more than we have sown, later than we sow it

The natural consequence of breaking God's Laws is adversity in some form

God is a God of love

And being a God of love when we willfully break His Laws

Discipline is coming

And it is not punitive it is not punishment

It is a loving parent disciplining His children for their own good

God's purpose is to make us more like Jesus

And God uses discipline to work a changed character within us

So sometime adversity is a result of what we do

## **And sometimes it is Satan's work**

**Luke 22 – Simon, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat**

In the Book of Job Satan accuses Job of only loving God

Because God has been so good to him

So God gives Satan permission to take away some of the blessings

You know little things like his job his family and his health

Job 2 – Then Job's wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die."; But he said to her, "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?"

Let's think about Job's statement

What happened to Job is actually from God by way of Satan  
If God is good and He is  
Then can't trials and hardship and adversity also be for our good  
Satan was intent upon the destruction of the early church  
He used the Jewish leadership and the Roman authorities to attack it  
But the persecution actually spread the Gospel  
Believers left where they were and went to other locations  
And wherever they went they took the Gospel with them  
All who live godly lives will suffer persecution – that is just the way it is  
But even in the persecution God will be at work  
1 Peter – After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His glory,  
will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.  
Sovereign God allows Satan limited access to us for our eternal good

Suffering comes from what we do or it comes from Satan

## **Or it comes because we live in a sinful world**

We live on a fallen planet outside the Garden of Eden  
There is disease injury  
A corrupt immoral world peopled by unscrupulous men and women  
Some of whom will rob injure or even kill you  
In the business world there are men and women we work for and with  
Who believe our back is their step ladder  
But God limits even the world in its ability to harm us  
That which Satan brings our way – that which the world inflicts upon us  
Is that which God allows  
Trials come to us by the permissive will of God  
That is hard to say hard to understand but it is real  
And God always will have a purpose for the trial

The first question is why – the second question is who  
And to answer to the second question is  
Either something we have done to ourselves  
Satan attempting to destroy us, or the fallen world in which we live

But no matter whether it is us - Satan - or the world  
It is God motivated by love sending or allowing trials into our lives  
We tend to evaluate life by looking at the moment we are in  
God is always interested in eternity and works in us toward that end  
It is more important to God that you become the person He wants you to be  
And accomplish the work He has for you to do  
Than that you are comfortable  
He is more interested in building your character  
Than whether your life is easy or you understand Him or not

## **All of these expressions of trials that ultimately come from God**

### **Are genuine expressions of love**

The greater issue than why you have trials or who brings them  
Is how do you respond when they arrive  
One way we respond is to look for somebody to blame  
This person caused it or that person  
Sometimes we blame God – He could have stopped this  
A second type of response is to look for a way of escape  
We try to figure out ways we can avoid or minimize the pain  
We take alcohol or drugs – we look for comfort outside the marriage  
A third way of dealing with it is to pretend that nothing is wrong  
This is probably the worse way  
If we hide it and pretend that the crisis doesn't exist  
It will affect us in any number of physical ways  
Ulcers hypertension depression  
High blood pressure nervous breakdowns - the list goes on  
One of the primary functions of the body of Christ  
Is to share each others joys and to share each others sorrows  
To comfort each other with Holy Spirit comfort  
And when we hide what is happening to us and how we feel about it  
We are not allowing the Holy Spirit

To use the church as it was intended to function  
We can also present ourselves as an object of pity  
In the comic strip Li'l Abner there was a character named Joe Blipshtick  
And wherever he went or whatever he was doing  
There was a black cloud over his head  
We can become just like that  
So that there is always a cloud of doom and gloom hanging over us  
The last improper response is to just give up  
Denying it is not a solution – running from it is not a solution  
Blaming others is not a solution – becoming an object of pity is not a solution – giving up is not a solution  
All of these are just an expression of unresolved anger  
And regardless of how we act or what we do – we still have the anger  
And the anger will continue long after the adversity is over

Trials come to our lives for a purpose  
When Paul prayed for his thorn in the flesh to be removed  
God said - no - I have you just where I want you  
Without this thorn you would be filled with pride  
But now you are dependent upon me  
And Paul you will discover that My grace will carry you through this trial  
You see My power is perfectly shown in your weakness  
When Paul understood this he actually got excited  
He wrote - more gladly I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of God may dwell in me...for when I am weak, then I am strong  
He no longer asked God to remove it  
For in his weakness he experienced the resurrection power of Christ  
**When we are at our very weakest – our nadir – our lowest point**  
**That is the point when God's power reaches its peak – its zenith**  
If I were to ask each one of you  
How would you like to experience the Holy Spirit at His peak in your life  
I think that most would raise their hands and say – include me in  
It that is the case – are you willing like Paul to endure suffering  
Are you willing like Paul to be brought to your weakest  
That the very power of God might be evident in and through you

In Philippians 3 Paul states that his goal  
Was to experience the very power of Christ  
In 2Cor he tells us that through suffering he did just that

## **Adversity reveals some things about us and our faith**

### **When we go through trials it reveals our true view of God**

It is easy to say nice things about God when our life is sweet  
But what we believe about God is tested during the trials of life

### **When we go through trials it also reveals the way we see ourselves**

And the needs we have in our lives  
Most of us see ourselves as imperfect sinners  
But God sees us as we truly are  
He sees us clothed in the righteousness of Christ  
He sees us as His children  
Indwelt by His presence sealed by His Spirit on our way to glory  
He also knows that part of our lives still under control of sin  
And He desires that we live out the righteousness  
We have been given positionally  
Some face adversity  
Absolutely certain that God is going to see them through it  
And they stand firm in the midst of all kinds of trials  
Some face adversity and it almost wipes them out  
Adversity shows where we are in our faith  
And our belief in the goodness and the power of God  
Are we doubting God blaming God or are we agreeing with Paul  
That God's grace is sufficient for us

So how should we respond to trials and adversity

We should respond like Paul and we should respond like Job

**First** we respond by asking the Lord – Why

**Secondly** we respond by crying out to the Lord for deliverance

## We are to consider trials as joyful because of their intended result

But that doesn't mean we have to want to stay in them

### **Third** When God showed Paul the purpose of his trial

Paul quit asking for it to leave

And even though it was a messenger from Satan

He began to thank God for the adversity

Some of you might be saying – You don't know how much I hurt

Are you telling me that I should thank God for this experience

Yes I am – I know it is difficult

If it was easy then we wouldn't call it a trial

But if you allow it

Adversity will cause the greatest leap forward in your Christian life

But for it to work you must understand some things

**First** – Adversity is God's tool for building character in your life

God uses adversity to increase your dependence upon Him

And to equip you for future ministry

Expect that result

If you look forward to God's intended result

It will help you get through

**Second** – Adversity usually comes in an area of your life that is weak

An area that God wants to strengthen

It comes in a fleshly area where Jesus is needed

And it comes to help you complete the work He intends for you to do

**Third** – Every trial that God allows into your life comes with a plan

It is not random – it has design – it has purpose  
If you can grasp that then you will know that  
Trials come bathed with the love of God for His children  
And have as their ultimate goal  
The purpose of conforming us to the likeness of Christ  
It has been said that whom God uses – He first bruises  
All of us will go through adversity – not just Christians – everybody  
Jesus told us we will – Scripture confirms it  
And life's experience has taught us that everyone does  
God must get kind of excited when He sees us  
Respond to adversity in the right fashion  
We do that when we begin to understand that God has purpose in it  
And He has chosen the area He wishes to work in  
And He will see us through  
Doesn't make it easy – but knowing God is there helps  
Always remember Rom 8:28 is true – God causes all things (that is the good and the bad that comes into our lives) God causes all things to work together for good, for those who love God, for those who are the called according to His great purposes  
That is true whether we believe it or not  
That is true whether we feel it or not  
So here is the key  
You will go through troubles – you will have sorrow – you will have pain  
Whether or not you profit from these things depends upon – you  
Believe that regardless of the painfulness of the situation  
God is at work in it  
And He intends to use this circumstance to help achieve your ultimate good  
Look to God for strength in the midst of it  
Ask God for His purpose in it  
Look to the area of your life that is being strengthened by it  
And finally trust in God to bring you through it  
If you do this when it is over – when the trial has passed  
You will be more like Jesus then before the adversity entered into your life  
Heb 12 – All discipline for the moment seem not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, after it is over it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness  
Job when he finally understood

Why God had allowed Satan such leeway in his life

Received a new vision of God – a much more personal vision

And he could honestly say that his suffering was worth it

Job 42 – I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You

Suffering handled correctly can give you a new vision of God

Romans 5:1-5 – Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in the hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, and perseverance, proven character, and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.