

GROWING IN OUR ADVERSITY

Adversity is a term that resonates deeply within the pages of the Bible, embodying the trials and tribulations that shape our faith and character.

Adversity means difficulty or misfortune. It refers to a challenging or unfavorable situation, or a state of hardship or trouble.

ADVERSITY IS GOD'S WAY OF GETTING OUR ATTENTION!

“Adversity, which looks and feels like such a determined enemy, can become a valuable ally. Only you can decide which it will be.”

When a child is born, we naturally expect them to grow, and if they don't, there's a problem.

This principle applies to the Christian life as well.

- Salvation is the beginning of our relationship with Christ.
- God doesn't want us to stay immature.
- After being born again through faith in Jesus,
- We should continually grow in the grace and knowledge of Him.

2 Peter 3:18 - Let the gift of undeserved grace and the understanding that come from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ help you keep on growing. Praise Jesus now and forever! Amen.

GROW in the Grace and Knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

By reading the Bible, praying, and observing how the Lord works, we will increase in Christlikeness and obedience.

Your life as a Christian should make non-believers question their disbelief in God!

But the Lord also uses a surprising means to bring us to maturity.

- Adversity is part of the universal experience of all believers,
- It can either hinder or accelerate our spiritual growth—
- It all depends on how we respond.
- View Adversity as an opportunity for spiritual growth!

Adversity is a condition of suffering and hardship involving anguish, pressure, trials, heartaches, or disappointments.

- It may be physical or emotional in nature,
- And either long or short in duration, but *it always causes pain.*
- Although none of us *want* hurt or trouble, if it comes, *we have* two options:

We can waste our sorrows or grow in our relationship with the Lord.

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Spiritual growth in adversity depends on two factors.

1. Our understanding of God's purpose for it. He allows adversity in our lives for specific reasons.

- **To get our attention.** When life is running smoothly, it's easy to ignore the Lord; but in adversity, *He suddenly has* our undivided attention.
- **To conquer pride.** If we're doing well, we might be tempted to look down on those who are struggling, but adversity humbles us.

The apostle Paul was given **awesome privileges and insights**, but along with them came a **"thorn in the flesh"** to keep him from exalting himself.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 - 7 or because of these surpassingly great revelations.

Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, **I was given a thorn in my flesh**, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, **"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."** Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul received hardships **"thorn in the flesh"** or affliction to torment him.

- God tells him that **His grace is sufficient**.
- That his strength is **made perfect in weakness**.
- Paul embraces **his weaknesses** and finds joy in them.
- They allow him to **boast in Christ's power**, not his own.
- This encourages us as well to Trust God's Faithfulness!!!

God allows humbling pain because He knows that pride prevents us from being useful to Him.

- **To remind us of our weakness.** A sense of **personal strength and adequacy** keeps us **self-sufficient**, but **the Lord knows how to weaken us** with affliction, so **we'll turn to Him for direction and strength.**

- **To increase our hatred of sin.** The suffering that comes with **disobedience** reminds us of **the awful impact of sin.**

God sometimes disciplines us with adversity so we will **learn to hate sin** and **practice righteousness.**

- **To demonstrate His faithfulness.** Only in **our greatest need** will we understand **how dependable and trustworthy** the Lord is.

Pain and hardship drive us to seek Him for help, and **during our suffering,** we discover that **He is always faithful.**

- **To equip us to comfort others.** When God comforts us in our affliction, we become a spring of comfort to others.

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 - Praise to the God of All Comfort

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, **4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.** 5 For just as **we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ,** so also **our comfort abounds through Christ.** 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

Paul is saying here that *God spiritually strengthens and encourages him* during Affliction so that he will be prepared to spiritually strengthen and encourage others who have similar hardships.

Having gone through pain, we are better able to empathize with those who are going through a similar situation.

- **To prepare us for service.** Experiencing hardship and suffering equips us to serve the Lord in various ways and meet the needs of others.
- **To express His love for us.** Because God loves us so much, ***He sends adversity to rescue us from dangers we don't see*** and to ***draw us into the safety of a life fully surrendered to Him...***
- **To change our direction.** God uses adversity to **stop us from going astray** and to **redirect our path into His will**.

2. **Our response to adversity.** To grow spiritually from the trials in our lives, we must respond as the Lord desires.

He has promised to teach us the way we should go Psalm 32:8 - I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

- **See it as coming from God.** Our first response should be to read God's Word to view our situation from His perspective.

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

If He has allowed suffering, He has something good to achieve through it.

- **Ask the Lord to reveal His goal for adversity.** The painful situations in our lives are not random events but **learning opportunities**.

If we glean as much as we can from our suffering, the truth we learn will be worth the pain.

- **Surrender to God's will.** Even if we don't fully understand why we're suffering, the right response is to **yield ourselves to whatever the Lord is doing**, knowing that **He only does what's best** for His children's lives.

- **Rest by trusting in His faithfulness.** The Lord always does what He's promised and is trustworthy in every situation.

Even in our pain, we can **rest in His faithfulness** to bring us through our adversity in a way that pleases and honors Him.

Biblical truths affirm that God's goal for our adversity is our spiritual growth.

Adversity is the Lord's most effective way of deepening our faith and commitment to Him.

After He has brought us through it, the foundation of ***our trust in Him is strengthened.***

1 Peter 1:6-7 - 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 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,

And with each trial, **our confidence in Him increases** as we look back and see **how He has been faithful.**

The area of adversity in our lives is where God is working to bring us to spiritual maturity.

The Lord has a goal in mind and knows exactly how to achieve it. He is in the process of maturing us from the inside.

Romans 5:3-5 - 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

This cannot be accomplished academically but **must be taught through the experience of suffering.**

Our responses to adversity reveal something about us.

- **Our view of God.** Do we think He's trustworthy?
- **Our view of ourselves.** Do we see ourselves as God's beloved children?
- **The importance of things in our lives.** If the Lord removes something we want to keep, our response reveals its priority in our hearts.
- **Our strengths and weaknesses.** It's in the difficulties that we discover how strong or weak we truly are.
- **Our capacity for endurance.** Do we have a firm foundation of faith that enables us to endure, or do we quickly give up?
- **Our faith in God.** How much do we trust the Lord and believe that He uses adversity for our good?

Our spiritual growth is determined by the way we view adversity.

We either see it as an obstacle in our lives or as an opportunity to grow in our relationship with the Lord.

In every trial, *His goal is that we increase our knowledge and understanding of His ways*, and *trust in His faithfulness*.

CLOSE:

Do you view adversity as an obstacle or an opportunity for spiritual growth?

- Why do you see it this way?

What keeps you from surrendering to God's will?

- *experiencing pain, disappointment, or loss?*

How has God worked in your life through adversities?

- What sins has He revealed?
- What lessons has He taught you?
- How has He trained you for service?