

"The Blessing of Trouble"

2 Cor. 4:8-10 *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*

One pastor friend wrote the following: *While attending a Bible conference several years ago, I heard Dr. Lee Roberson of Chattanooga, Tennessee, announce that he would speak the next evening on "The Secret of Greatness." I arrived early the next evening with notebook in hand, ready to take down several points of instruction. I wanted to be sure to get the facts straight from the man who knew what he was talking about. Dr. Roberson, of course, is one of the greatest men alive today in the work of God. After he was introduced to speak, he stood up, announced the text, and repeated his title: "I give you tonight the secret of greatness. It is found in one key word, and that word is "TROUBLE." I was so disappointed not to get a systematic formula of instruction from Dr. Roberson based upon his years of experience and success. But the more he preached, the more I realized that what he was saying surely was the true secret of greatness.*

People react to trouble in several different ways. Some grumble, others gripe, many growl, a few groan; then there are those who grieve and thank the Lord; then some grow.

Trouble will never leave one the same. Someone has said that life is a bowl of cherries but some of the cherries are sour. I think it is necessary that we accept a problem as it is, adjust to it, then approach it with a determination to do something about it. Trouble is nothing new to God's people. The Bible, of course, is filled with stories of those in trouble. The Hebrew children had their fiery furnace. Daniel had his lions' den. Joseph was cast into prison. Paul was shipwrecked and beaten with stripes. Peter was sent to prison. John was exiled at Patmos. James had his head cut off. David fled from Saul. Samson had his eyes put out. These are just a few.

Clyde Gordon, who is completely paralyzed from his neck down, edits a magazine called The Triumph. In it he said recently: Christ is no security against storms, But He is perfect security in storms. He does not promise an easy passage, But He does guarantee a safe landing. Someone said recently,

"The road to success is always under construction." It seems that those who have it hard always get more done. I read in a magazine recently that great civilizations of history have been in the northern hemisphere. On the equator life is easy and comfortable; there have been no lasting achievements. Now let me point out some benefits of trouble.

I. TROUBLE UNIFIES.

2 Cor. 4:8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

2 Cor. 4:11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake,...

2 Cor. 4:12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

2 Cor. 4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, ...

2 Cor. 4:15 For all things *are* for your sakes, ...

2 Cor. 4:16 For which cause we faint not; ...

2 Cor. 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

2 Cor. 4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: ...

Notice the words "WE," "US," "OUR," and "YOUR," in these verses.

When someone passes away in a family, their loved ones often gather from far and near for the funeral. People want to be together when in trouble. Usually, when someone is seriously ill, their friends and neighbors gather to check on them and make sure things are all right. During the nightmare of a tragedy, families are drawn very close together, and the church is unified and harmonized in a new way. Trouble becomes a blessing in a very unique way.

Trouble not only draws people together, but it also draws them to the Lord. David said, "*Before I was afflicted, I went astray*" (Ps. 119:67). Many a person has called for a preacher in time of trouble to make things right with God.

Then trouble also draws people to church. It is not uncommon to see a whole family show up at church after a funeral. Sometimes when people get bad news from the doctor about their physical condition, they take a renewed interest in church. So trouble tends to unify.

II. TROUBLE PURIFIES.

2 Cor. 4:16 *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*

The Lord uses trouble in our lives to help bring about a change, a growth, and a development in our INWARD man... The soul; the un-decaying, the immortal part. our spiritual and true being, the "life" which even in our mortal bodies (2 Cor. 4:11) "manifests the life of Jesus." Our trials are regulated. There is someone who is at the controls of the trials.

- A. **The Time Is Regulated- cp. 1 Peter 1:6** says "though now for a season" the length or duration of our trial is under the care of our Lord
- B. **The Temperature Is Regulated- 1 Peter 1:7** says "as gold tried in the fire" the goldsmith will not let the precious gold be subjected to more than it can stand, neither will our God allow us to be tempted/tested with more than we can stand.

Here is the effect of trouble. It was a true blessing in disguise, a benefit to the life of God's good servant. Paul emphasized that "*all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*" (Rom. 8:28). He also said, "*Tribulation worketh patience*" (Rom. 5:3). A graduate degree in spirituality comes from attending the *University of Hard Knocks*. All troubles and trials are meant to purify us.

III. TROUBLE VERIFIES.

2 Cor. 4:13 *We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;...* (The "commonality" of the troubles and trials). ALL believers have trials and troubles. A person would be hard-pressed to identify a real Christian that has never experienced a trial. It seems that it is a mark of all children of God that verifies that they are truly part of the family of faith.

Paul also said in 1 Cor. 10:13, "*There hath no temptation (trouble) taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation (trouble) also make a way to escape.*" One old preacher said that we ought to be good to everybody because everybody is having a tough time. God is no respecter of persons. He has no pets. In spite of this, we sometimes feel like victims. It seems that we suffer far more than others. But this is simply not the case. I think if all the truth were known, we would probably not trade places with

anybody else in the whole world. Trouble is surely a common thing with ALL Christians.

Dr. Tom Wallace wrote: "*The world is filled with veneer, sham, hypocrisy and deceit. After a serious bout with trouble, we don't usually care as much about what people think. Pride is plowed under, the world loses its value, the appetites for sin lose their taste. God could have kept Daniel out of the lions' den, Paul and Silas out of jail, the Hebrew children from the fiery furnace; but it was good for all these to go through these experiences. Dr. Jack Hudson made this statement in our church: "My soul demands reality." I thought it was interesting since Brother Jack has been through deep waters so many times with his own physical condition, with a serious arthritic condition and two or three hospital bouts for various other things. It doesn't seem strange, then, that Brother Hudson abounds with genuine sincerity. Several times I have heard preachers remark, "He's for real."*

IV. TROUBLE SIMPLIFIES.

2 Cor. 4:17-18 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

One thing is for certain, when troubles come they remind us of what is really important in life. It's not money, fame, possessions, or anything else that is of this "temporal" world but rather the things which are "eternal."

Years ago I read the words of a preacher who said, "The only things that really matter in life are: WHO YOU LOVE, WHO LOVES YOU, AND WHERE YOU GO WHEN YOU DIE." Troubles have a way of settling those issues for us.

V. TROUBLE GLORIFIES.

2 Cor. 4:15 *For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.*

Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible commented, *Redound to the glory of God.* That God may have augmented praise; that his glory in the salvation of men may abound. The sentiment of the passage is, that it would be for the glory of God that as many as possible should be brought to live praise and

thanksgivings to him; and that therefore Paul endeavored to make as many converts as possible. He denied himself; he welcomed toil; he encountered enemies; he subjected himself to dangers; and he sought by all means possible to bring as many as could be brought to praise God. The word "redound," here means abound, or be abundant; and the sense is, *that the overflowing grace thus evinced in the salvation of many would so abound as to promote the glory of God.*

Now in review let me say that trouble is good for a Christian. It may be hard to endure, but in the end it will bring forth peaceful fruit of righteousness and a note of praise. May the Lord help us to understand what James meant when he said, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (trouble)."