

BLESSINGS OF ADVERSITY

July 5, 2020

It is amazing, but God uses difficulties, problems, confinements, and many other troubles in life — to bless us.

Deuteronomy 23:5 gives us an example of this: “the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee.”

God can cause affliction and difficulties to work in our favor.

There is something important that we need to understand. Rom. 8:28 “And we know, that all things are working together (present tense) for good. For those who love the Lord.” Do we know this?

All things means not only good times, but also the difficult times. Everything God does is for our good.

Let's go back to the beginning, when our first parents sinned.

In the garden of Eden, our first parents were tested.

They listened to the serpent, and received his corrupt nature.

And because of a fallen corrupt nature...

In God's love and mercy, he had to place restraints on man.

Otherwise, man would very quickly become totally corrupt.

So God declared in Genesis 3:17: (law of first mention)

“Cursed is the ground for thy sake;” this was for our sake...

God had to place restraints, restrictions upon our fallen nature.

What was the curse that God had to place upon fallen man?

Sweat, toil, hard work, thorns, pain, and many other obstacles.

God loves to bless his people.

**But so often, man goes astray from God, when things are too easy.
The Bible is loaded with examples of this.**

**Just in the book of Judges alone, time and time again, we see...
When God's people were blessed, they soon forgot God, went astray.
People lose their dependency on God, when everything is going well.**

**So what does God have to do, He has to remove his blessings.
He has to allow enemies and problems to come.
Then people remember the Lord, and turn back to him for help.
This is what our present world crisis is all about.**

Some examples - blessings of difficulty

Isaiah 45:3 - "And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places..."

Special insights into God's word, come from passing through the dark and difficult experiences. There is a price to pay to understand many truths in God's word. Proverbs tells us: buy the truth and sell it not.

"Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." Proverbs 23:23.

**Truth can be very expensive. We have to pay for the truth we know.
To have an effective message, it is very costly.**

**Job paid a great price in his trial. At the end of this trial he could say:
Lord, I've heard you with my ears, but now my eyes see you.**

**It took a long purifying trial, to reveal hidden needs in the heart of Job.
What he went through has helped many other people in their trials.**

**In Ezekiel 3:1-4, the prophet is told, to eat the scroll, or book.
It would be sweet in his mouth, but bitter in his belly.
In Revelation 10:9-10, the apostle John had the same experience.
John was told, eat the book. Devour the word of God, then speak it.**

**Often when we hear the word of God, it is sweet to our taste.
But to have it worked out in our heart, it is often bitter.
In the natural, what you eat in your mouth, gets into your stomach.
It gets into your blood, and into every cell of your body.**

**This is true spiritually. When we hear the word of God, it's sweet.
But as it is worked out in our being, it often is bitter, difficult.
We have paid a high price, but we also have an authority to speak it.
Before John could prophesy, he was told to eat the little book.
Thoroughly digest the word before you speak it. Revelation 10:9-10:**

**“And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book.
And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly
bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little
book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth
sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.”**

**When I was still a teenager, God gave me many promises.
But, he also said; you first must have many hard times.
I will give you the treasures of darkness. Buy the truth, and sell it not.
Many treasures are found in the dark.**

**Gold and Silver are usually found underground, in darkness.
Diamonds, are found in the dark, pearls are found in difficult places.
Treasures are found in the dark, not in the light.
Many spiritual treasures are deeply hidden in God's word.
There is a high price to have them, to understand them.**

Where do beautiful butterflies come from? An ugly caterpillar. Then the caterpillar begins to spin a cocoon all-around himself. Not pretty. Many months go by, but something is happening inside. A Beautiful butterfly is being developed, and later comes forth. Do You see this? Beauty is often preceded by unpleasant difficulties. Everything God has created, has a divine message for us. (Pearls)

**Jeremiah's message -
In captivity I will give you a heart to know me**

Israel, Gods nation, was terribly backslidden. They had turned from God, they worshipped other gods. The ministry was hypocritical, the prophets prophesied falsely. So God gave them a warning. I am raising up the nation of Babylon. I am going to send Babylon against you, destroy the city and temple. And you will be taken as captives to Babylon for 70 years. But while you are in Babylon, I will cleanse you from idols. And give you a heart to know me. And bring you home again.

Let's read Jeremiah 24:5-7: partially

“The Lord said.... so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.”

Here is the whole purpose of captivity, of confinement, of taking away ones freedom, of totally interrupting ones lifestyle. To save us eternally. To do an eternal work in our heart. Foreign circumstances necessary.

Prisons are God's mercy

**Why are people in prison? They have violated God's laws.
God's laws bring freedom. When they're broken, it brings bondage.**

So think of this - why are people in prison?

**They have violated - you shall not steal; you shall not kill;
You shall not commit adultery, you shall not lie, you shall not covet.
They did not honor father or mother, they're worshiping other things.
All of God's laws bring freedom, to break them brings bondage.**

**Prison or captivity is actually God's mercy to save people eternally.
It is to turn them around.**

**In prison your entire lifestyle is totally interrupted, freedom removed.
It is to get one's attention, to turn them around, to save them.**

The Example of Nebuchadnezzar

**A tremendous example of God using trouble to tremendously bless
and change a man, is the story of Nebuchadnezzar in Book of Daniel.**

**Nebuchadnezzar was a tremendously wicked King. God sent this king
against Jerusalem, because they had so turned away from God.
Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Solo's beautiful temple, ruined the city.
Tens of thousands of Jews were slaughtered.
The rest of them taken as prisoners into Babylon for 70 years.**

**Back in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar erected an image of himself.
He wanted everyone to worship him, at the sound of all the music.
Music has tremendous power. At the sound of all the music...
Satan uses music to draw worship unto himself.
We see this at the fall of Lucifer in heaven.
This great musician used music to draw worship To himself.**

We all remember story of 3 men who refused to worship his image. They were all thrown into a fiery furnace, heated 7 Times hotter. Then the Lord himself stood with the three in the fiery furnace.

Dan. 3:24 - “Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.”

Dan. 3:26 - “Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the burning fiery furnace, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the most high God, come forth, come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.”

Dan. 3:28 - “Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.” (still he was on converted).

In Dan. 4, Nebuchadnezzar tells of his future conversion experience. He has a dream... and calls Daniel the prophet to interpret it for him. He sees a mighty tree that reached the heavens, the ends of the earth. This mighty tree was cut down, no fruit, only a stump was left.

Daniel interprets - you are this tree. You’ll be brought down to nothing. You will be turned into an animal for seven years. You will dwell with the beasts of the field, You will eat grass. You will be wet with the dew of Heaven, until you realize something. Until you know that the Most High is running this earth and all of its kingdoms, and He is the one who gives authority to anyone who is ruling these kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar, God gave you this authority.

What did Nebuchadnezzar learn from this dream. Nothing.
(in this chapter, he's giving his testimony)

Dan.4:29-32 - “At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

Dan. 4:33-35 - The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws. And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”

Dan. 4:37 - “Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”

**What did it take to transform this very wicked king, this world ruler...
Into a deep worshipper of God? Into a man who greatly honored God.
Into a man of great brokenness and humility?**

**First, he had to be cut down like a tree, totally barren, fruitless.
He was turned into an animal for seven years. Out in the field...
Eating grass, wet with the dew. Total humiliation.
Stripped of all his pride and power.**

**Then he realized that God alone rules the universe, and gives power
and authority, even to the basest man - like himself.**

Our theme

**We are talking about blessings of adversity, trouble.
God uses trouble, pain, difficulty, confinement to change and bless us.
Even when Nebuchadnezzar saw the three Hebrews saved from the
fiery furnace, his heart was not changed. He was still proud/arrogant.**

**Even when he had the dream of the tree that was cut down,
And being turned into an animal for seven years, still no change.
It takes great difficulty and humiliation, to be changed.
This is one of the greatest conversions of human history.**

Can God use our past mistakes?

**Let's talk about another man with a terrible past.
But became one of the greatest men of all time.
The apostle Paul. Before converting, persecuted 10,000 Christians.
After his conversion, he became the greatest defender of the church.
He wrote 14 of the 27 New Testament books.
How could God use his terrible past?**

**He beat men and women, throwing them into prison.
He even had some people put to death, like Stephen.**

**Let's see how God turned the curse into a blessing for Paul.
One of the first things that was said about Paul at his conversion:
I will show him what great things he must suffer for my sake.
“For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s
sake.” Acts 9:16, KJV.**

**Paul had been the greatest persecutor of the church.
Now, everywhere he went, he was going to be persecuted, beat up.
Can you imagine how Paul felt when he was being beaten up?
Oh, this is what I used to do all the time. I deserve this.
He was able to accept the Many persecutions,
because of what he did to other people in his past.**

**Do we see how God uses difficulty trouble persecution, to bless us.
Let's Remember Romans 8:28 all things are working together for good
For those who love God.**

**In closing, let's remember the life of Joseph.
In Genesis 37, Joseph's older brothers, envied him. Wanted to kill him.
Instead, they sold him as a slave into Egypt, at age 17.
Everything went wrong for Joseph, but he had promises from God.**

**In Egypt, he was accused of trying to rape his masters wife.
He did exactly the opposite, he ran out of the house.
And was put in jail because the woman lied about him.
Here in a strange land, as a slave, in prison, everything going wrong.
In Genesis 50:20, a number of years later when there was a famine.
His brethren came to Egypt looking for food. He said to them;
All bad things you did, you meant for evil, but God meant for good.**

