

## “Why We Go Through Trials,” Part 2 - 2 Corinthians 12:5-7 – April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017

- Today's teaching will be part two of a new series we began last week titled, “Why We Go Through Trials.”
- After seeing the Apostle Paul's example of ways to get through a trial in chapter eleven, we now turn a corner in chapter twelve.
- In addition to how we get through trials, we're now going to see why it is and what it is that God does in and through the trials.

### 1. Trials enable us to see what God is showing us (Verses 1-4)

- Paul describes in the third person that fourteen years prior he was caught up to the third heaven either in or out of the body.
- He says that while only God knows if it was in or out of the body, he heard inexpressible things that no one is permitted to tell.
- Paul tells them this because were it not for him being stoned and left for dead in Lystra, he would have never seen this vision.

- One of the things I'm learning in my own personal walk with the Lord is there seems to be a common denominator with trials.
- Namely, the trials preceding the revelation as a catalyst for the revelation, so God has my attention to receive the revelation.
- This because, it's only when adversity strikes that I'll stop and consider what it is that God desires to show me in that adversity.

Ecclesiastes 7:14 (NKJV) — 14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, But in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, So that man can find out nothing that will come after him.

- It's important to understand that God does not have us go through trials just for the sake of the trial itself He's doing something.
- Often times, God will allow the adversity to strike for the sole purpose of getting us to consider what we never would otherwise.
- It's for this reason we would do well to stop and consider what it is that God wants for us to see, hear and more importantly do.

I like how one commentator said it, “Why was Paul given this vision? First, he was given it for you and me so that we would benefit from what the Lord showed Paul. Secondly, he was given it because what God told him through this vision sustained him through all the trials of ministry and enabled Paul to give everything God wanted him to give to all generations. This vision helped Paul finish his course.”

### 2. Trials protect us from pride and arrogance (Verses 5-7)

- v5 Paul basically tells them that if I have to boast, it's not going to be about myself, it's going to be about my weakness instead.
- v6 He then says he won't be a fool but hold back so no one will think more of him than is warranted by what he does or says.
- v7 He says to stay humble due to this great vision, God gave him a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment him.

- I think you would agree that at first, one might come away from this with the impression that God is being unjustly cruel to Paul.
- However, upon a closer look at what Paul says in verse seven you realize that this was actually a gift to Paul from the Lord.
- In other words, instead of a curse of Satan tormenting Paul, this was a gift from God in protecting him from the danger of pride.

Charles Spurgeon - “Paul says, ‘There was given to me.’ He reckoned his great trial to be a gift. It is well put. He does not say, ‘There was inflicted upon me a thorn in the flesh,’ but ‘There was given to me.’”

- If you were to ask me what I thought the main reason we as Christians struggle with why God allows trials, this would be it.
- Let me explain, when we're in the midst of a trial we're prone to think that God is punishing us when He's actually protecting us.
- That's not to say that God won't use adversity to discipline and chastise us as his children, but even then it's because of love.

Hebrews 12:5-13 (NKJV) — 5 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; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 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. 12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

- I would suggest whether the trial is for the purpose of correcting us or protecting us we can become discouraged unnecessarily.
- It's unnecessary because in the end it's always for our good and God's glory, such that, God knows the end from the beginning.
- I'm personally of the belief that God desires first and foremost to protect us from that which He doesn't want to correct us for.

- Here's the bottom line, the blessing of God comes packaged with the adversity allowed by God to protect us from our own self.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest that the prosperity is proportionate to the adversity in the sense that it brings about humility.

I'd like to close with Alan Redpath, who I believe sums this up perfectly - “Perhaps you have looked into the face of a Christian who is always smiling, who never seems to have any worry, is always happy and radiant and, as you have thought about your own circumstances, you have said in your heart, ‘I wish I were he! He seems to have no problems. He doesn't have to take what I do.’ But perhaps you have lived long enough, as I have, to know that sometimes the most radiant face hides great pressures, and often the man who is being most blessed of God is being most buffeted by the devil.”