

Why God Allows Adversity - Ephesians 2:10-13 – February 11th, 2018

- I've titled today's teaching, "Why God Allows Adversity."
- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the most misunderstood truths in scripture it's that of why God allows difficulty.
- By misunderstood, I mean that often times, we're prone to misinterpret the adversity in our lives, as God being angry with us.

- Sadly, this can result in a Christian distancing themselves from the Lord by virtue of their not understanding what God is doing.
- Please know that I'm in no way attempting to answer all the why questions related to the ways of God in dealing with us as His.
- However, in the text before us today, the Apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit does provide us with one of the reasons for difficulty.

- Thankfully, this is one of those places in God's Word where we're told what God desires to do in our lives by allowing adversity.
- As such, what follows are two reasons as to why it is we can better understand the trials that God will allow us to go through.
- My hope and prayer is that this will be an encouragement especially to those who have or are experiencing a very painful trial.

1. He's in the process of creating a masterpiece (Verse 10)

- Here Paul uses an interesting word in describing the work God has prepared in advance for us saying we are God's handiwork.
- Other translations render this as workmanship, or my personal favorite, "masterpiece," and it's even more interesting in Greek.

- In the original language of the Greek New Testament this word masterpiece is *poiema*, which is where we get the word, poem.
- In other words, we are God's work of art, which means that God is in the process of creating this "masterpiece" with our lives.
- The problem is in order for God to do this in and with our lives, He has to first remove the separation and draw us closer to Him.

2. He's bringing us closer to Him in order to complete it (Verses 11-13)

- In verses eleven and twelve, Paul reminds them as Gentiles, they were, at that time, separated as foreigners and without hope.
- Then in verse thirteen he says now, in Christ Jesus, those who were once far away, have been brought near by Christ's blood.
- Now that they, and us with them are in Christ and near to Christ, the process has begun in which we are made to be like Christ.

Romans 8:28–29 - 28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

- This is the chief purpose of the difficult trials in our lives, in that; God is using them to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ.
- Have you ever noticed how it is that we can become like and even behave like those people that we spend the most time with?
- I know you know where I'm going with this, but the point is that we become more like Christ the more time we spend with Christ.

Acts 4:13 - When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Philippians 1:3–6 -- 3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

- The problem we have with this is the time it takes from the "begun" to get to the "complete," because we are so very impatient.
- We live in an Instagram and Snap Chat world that cheapens the end product under the banner of getting everything instantly.
- We had this saying when I was in business; the bitterness of poor quality lingers on long after the sweetness of a cheap price.

- I would suggest that when we become impatient with the process between "begun" and "complete," we do so to our own peril.
- By that I mean we fail to see the value of what God wants to create in and through His process of making us His masterpiece.
- And oh what a glorious and magnificent masterpiece we will be, so much so, that the Artist of artists will put His name on us.

Isaiah 48:10 (NKJV) — 10 Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

Jeremiah 18:1–4 (NKJV) — 1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying: 2 "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words." 3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. 4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.

- When I was about 10-years old, I took piano lessons and my mom made me learn to play Hymn number 272, in our hymnal.
- Now, 46-years later, that hymn has become one of my favorite all time hymns, which is the hymn "Have Thine Own Way, Lord."
- I hope you'll kindly indulge me in closing as I share with you this hymn as well as the story behind this cherished hymn of old.

Jeremiah 18 sets the scene for this hymn written by Adelaide A. Pollard in 1902 after she was inspired by a simple prayer of an elderly woman at a prayer meeting: "It really doesn't matter what you do with us, Lord -- just have your way with our lives" "Have Thine Own Way, Lord" was composed during a time when Miss Pollard was trying to raise funds to make a trip to Africa. Her unsuccessful attempt to do this left her experiencing a "distress of soul." This crisis of the soul and the simple prayer of an elderly lady provided a setting for personal reflection on the will of God for her life. After the prayer meeting, she returned home and wrote the hymn as we sing it today.