I KNOW THAT GOD IS GOOD BUT WHY AM I HURTING SO MUCH?



ADAM HOUGE

I Know That God Is Good, But Why Am I Hurting So Much?™
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Introduction

This book was written for Christians who deeply love the Lord. It was not written for those who have never committed themselves to Him in an intimate relationship, but for those who have devoted their life to Him.

It was written for those Christian who are struggling with trials or have had tragic circumstances overtake their life—circumstances that would leave a person wondering, “God, how could You let this happen?”

We will explain God’s intentions as we explore the depths of His love, grace, and sovereignty.

God Created You to Love You

You are a special and precious creation of God. You are treasured and cherished by your Maker. Thousands of years before you were formed in your mother's womb, He formed you in the thoughts of His heart. Before creation ever existed, He entertained His mind with you. He imagined what life would be like to be with you and how He would interact with you.

He thought of who you would be, what you would look like, what your personality would be like, how you would respond to life, and how life would respond to you. He took great pleasure in the thought of you, so He set out to create heaven and earth as places to meet with His special friend—you.

You are loved more than you could ever imagine, and you have been loved since before God created time! God created you to be His special child, and you have meant everything to Him. For your sake, He has changed the seasons and the times for thousands of years since Creation. He has raised nation upon nation, king upon king, to create the perfect circumstances for you to find Him as Savior.

He has caused all of the households and dwelling places to be in the places they are. He has moved the hearts of the people so that they would make the decisions they have made, to live where they live and do what they do in life. That way, each person may have the greatest chance of groping after Him and finding salvation. Even as it is written,

"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us…" Act 17:26–27

In this, God moved His pawns in place; He has been moving these pieces of the world for thousands of years to prepare the day of your birth. Then, since you were born, He has been preparing all things around you, having imagined how life would respond to you so that He could give you exactly what you need to respond to the life that is found in Jesus Christ.

In this, you have found the love of God. In His love, you have found a beautiful relationship. But in this relationship, God is more than your Beloved; He has also become your Father.

When parents decide to have a child, they are deciding to bring someone into their life with whom to have a relationship. God decided that He wanted a relationship with you and, thus, made you His precious baby.

Although circumstances of life may not always be favorable toward us, God uses all things for the greater good. Because He is always good, there is nothing that will come upon your life that God won't turn into good. Even if you don't think good can come from it, God will turn every bad situation into something greater than you can imagine—if you let Him. Even as it is written,

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think…" Ephesians 3:20

God's love is faithful, and He *will* do exceedingly, abundantly above everything you can imagine to save you and to bless you because He loves you exceedingly, abundantly above anything you can comprehend. You are worth everything to Him, and there's nothing He wouldn't give for you.

He proved this when He stepped down from His Lordly and heavenly throne and came down as a man to be rejected, hated, and homeless, living in the hills and the high country, starving and thirsty, hiding in the deserted places, preaching love and healing others, all while He waited to be betrayed in the day of His death.

He suffered the loss of all things long before the cross. He was hated, rejected, persecuted, hungry, and homeless for years. Even at His birth—as a young, innocent baby—He was hunted by Herod. But because of His passionate zeal for you, He would rather suffer homelessness on this earth, letting the rain cover His head at night, so that you could have a home with Him forever. Think about it: Do you honestly believe He was able to find a place to sleep every night? Even Jesus said,

"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Matthew 8:20

He chose to come down to this world knowing that He would suffer homelessness, rejection, and the loss of all things. He lived in the wilderness when traveling from city to city to preach His abundant love, all while He was rejected by His family and lost His friends—and some of His disciples. Even as the Scriptures say,

"From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more." John 6:66

And that His family rejected Him is evident. As it is written,

“For even His brothers did not believe in Him.” John 7:5

With much forethought, He knew that if He came into this world, He would suffer the loss of all things. He knew that He would be hated, despised, and rejected by His friends, His nation, and His family. He knew that coming to this earth would create many enemies and that it would lead to Him being crucified.

Yet He counted you as someone worth suffering for. You were worth it to Him, so He came and suffered for years for you. Not days, weeks, or months, but years. He knew this would happen, but He still counted you as someone worth suffering for just to love you, save you, and have a relationship with you.

Then, after He suffered for three years during His ministry, He went on to be rejected and murdered by His own people. By His sacrifice He has shown you that He would rather be mocked, hated, homeless, spit on, beat in the face, whipped, scourged, completely humiliated, stripped naked, and murdered on a cross than spend another moment in eternity without you.

You have meant so much to Him! He can’t abide the thought of being without you! He has loved you with an eternal love, and there is nothing in heaven and earth that could ever separate you from it. He would pass through heaven and earth, leap the highest mountain, plunge the deepest depth, fight the mightiest of beasts, risk His life, and die just to save you.

Beloved, why then would we question the goodness of God just because *we* suffer? He came to save you from the sufferings of this present life, to redeem you and restore you in the heavenly places. In the meantime, while we wait for His redemption with patience, we must suffer the things of this life with long forbearance, knowing and believing that God is good.

He allows bad things to happen for good reasons—reasons that build your character and restore your heart and soul, though the circumstances may hurt. He is good, and His love abounds forever. But to prove His love, He has suffered for you. Is it too much to ask that you should do the same for Him, to prove your love for Him? Beloved, lay down this present life to pick up an eternally peaceful life with Christ.

He counted you as someone worth suffering for, and you also should count Him as One worth suffering for. We don’t always suffer due to persecution, but when bad things happen because we’re following Him, we’re suffering for Him. Sometimes we have to follow God into the valley. Knowing, then, that you’re

following Him, consider that He has gone into the place of brokenness before you. He knows in advance what you will suffer because He has gone before you in it.

He has known everything that you would go through and has long known how He would save you, restore you, and comfort you. You were in His mind before He came down, and you were in His heart while He was here. Even now you are His passionate focus as He sits at the right hand of God, intervening for you.

Everything that God brings on you, He brings on you for your good and not for harm. Although some things may hurt, He has promised to restore you with an eternal life of peace. He will restore you both in this life and in the next.

Remember that after Jesus suffered death, He was raised immortal. Remember that after Job lost everything, He was given double. Consider that after Elijah suffered loneliness in persecution, he cried out to God in his brokenness, saying, “I alone am left, and they seek to take my life!”

Remember that immediately after this, God gave Him Elisha as a permanent companion until the day he ascended into heaven. Remember that when he ascended, he was no longer alone, for fifty sons of the prophets followed him and witnessed his ascension.

God has always refreshed, healed, and restored His servants. Yet there will be a time and a place for us to go home to the Lord. We will no longer be healed in this life at that time, because God intends to heal us forever and will take us home in peace. Even as it is written,

“The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.” Isaiah 57:1–2

Beloved, God will deliver you in this life and abundantly bless you in the next. Although you suffer now, God will lift up your face and wipe every tear from your eyes. Even as He has promised,

“Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, streaming to the goodness of the Lord for wheat and new wine and oil, for the young of the flock and the herd; their souls shall be like a well-watered garden, and they shall sorrow no more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old, together; for I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them, and make them rejoice rather than sorrow.” Jeremiah 31:12–13

“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Revelation 21:4

God has promised to comfort you. Be alone with the Lord in the secret place, and He will comfort you now. When you’re hurting, run into your Daddy’s arms, not away from them. Remember that He will allow your sufferings to continue for your growth, which is a greater good than redeeming you immediately. Although trials may hurt, when God brings them upon you, it’s for your growth. Now, God doesn’t bring every trial on you, but with those He does, He is seeking to grow you. There are some trials that we receive from circumstances outside of growth. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. Consider Job: He neither committed sin nor did anything deserving of his situation, but he suffered nonetheless.

Sometimes we suffer because of wicked people. God gives us perfectly free will, that we may choose either choose to love Him or not. But some people choose to use their free will for the wrong things. People will persecute you, take advantage of you, or hurt you without regard for your life. But God’s love is above all these things, and He will restore your heart. It’s not His fault that people are wicked. Although He can stop all things, He has permitted men to do good or evil during this era. Then, when He returns, He has promised peace for those who have loved the Lord.

In that time He *will* stop wicked people from doing hurtful things. He *will* restore what has been lost, build up what’s been broken down, and heal what has been hurt. Even now, God intends to restore you in His love. But don’t blame Him when evil people do hurtful things. It’s their fault, and they —not God— should be blamed.

Yet remember that you also were once wicked to the Lord, and His Son was crucified because of you. Yet He loved you and forgave you. If anyone has hurt you, go and do likewise. Forgive the unforgivable and love the unlovable. In this, you may find the impossible happening: A sinner may repent and find Jesus Christ, being broken by His loving-kindness at work in you. For it is the loving-kindness of Christ that has led us to repentance. Go show your enemies the same and you’ll be blessed.

But no matter your circumstances, God will use them for good. He is so powerful, so good, and so loving that He can turn any circumstance into an opportunity for good. He will use everything that happens to you for your good

and for your growth. So keep your heart open to Him when you're suffering, and pray for wisdom. He will use the situation for good, to show you something you've never known and to restore you.

However, there are times when God will ***give*** us trials for our growth. He will humble us through circumstances, that we may learn obedience from the things we suffer—even as Jesus learned obedience from the things He suffered. As we read,

"…though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Hebrews 5:8

Pruning isn't pleasant to a plant. If it had any sense of feeling, getting its limbs cut off would be excruciating. But in the end it bears much more fruit and is a far more profitable plant. Not all discipline is given to us because we've done something wrong. Sometimes discipline is given to us merely for growth, that we may bear the fruit of righteousness. It's given to us so that we would learn and understand how to be self-disciplined. Nevertheless, whether due to sin or to the need for growth, no chastisement seems joyful, but rather painful. Yet remember that in His discipline, God is preparing you for eternal redemption. Even as it is written,

"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." Hebrews 12:11

God doesn't bring anything on us for our harm, but for our good. We learn through suffering to depend on Jesus and to be strengthened by Him. It causes us to draw nearer to Him and, thus, increases our relationship with Him. It is through the bonds of love that we overcome the burdens of life. God, through love, shall rescue us from every burden of life. But in the meantime we are called to lean on Him for strength as He holds us through it all.

When life presses you down, remember that you weren't created for adversity; you were created for love. You were created for an eternally peaceful relationship with Jesus Christ. Remember this and walk in love toward your Savior. When life is hard, don't question God and don't blame Him. Press into Jesus and He will comfort you. Satan would have you sit alone in brokenness, but God would have you climb into His arms and be held.

God Holds You Through It All

No matter what, God is always there for you. He hasn't gone through what He has gone through just to abandon you in the midst of your needs. God takes care of all of your daily needs, even as you are called to pray for your "daily bread."

Love is as necessary for the heart as food and water are for the body. When trials are difficult, we often become discouraged and broken. In this time, love and encouragement are necessities. Without them it's hard to go on day after day.

God knows this and never forsakes us. He always loves us and will cherish us in our brokenness. God is always there, even when we don't feel Him. He is there constantly, holding us through it all.

But love doesn't always look like we want it to. Sometimes we suffer trials not for growth, but for sin. When people walk in sin, God gives them what is necessary to turn their lives back around.

Always examine your own heart. If you're suffering a trial, come before the Lord and ask if there's anything you've done wrong. Think of any sins you may have been walking in lately; and if there are any, consider that God may be disciplining you for the sake of repentance. When God's children walk in a pattern of sin, He chastises them for repentance. In this case He doesn't hold us through our suffering until we first repent. But He gives us the suffering so that we may learn repentance and to walk according to a pattern of righteousness. Then, when we repent, God is waiting eagerly by our side to hold us again.

Consider Jonah. He didn't want to go to Nineveh, but instead resisted God. So God sent a heavy storm on him while he sought to flee the Lord. It was at that point that he threw himself in the sea to deliver the people in the vessel. Then God caused him to be swallowed up by a fish, where he suffered for three days.

Then, ***after*** he repented, God commanded the fish to spit him out on dry land. It wasn't until he repented that he was relieved from his suffering. He knew to follow the Lord, but he chose his own heart and was rebuked by God. Even as Jonah himself said,

"Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me." Jonah 1:12

But that God has mercy after repentance is evident, for after Jonah prayed, God relented in His wrath. As we read,

“Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish’s belly. And he said:

“‘I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, and He answered me.

“‘Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice. For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Then I said, “I have been cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.” The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; the deep closed around me; weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the moorings of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me forever; yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God.

“‘When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple.

“‘Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy. But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.’

“So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.” Jonah 2:1–10

After he repented, God forgave him. But in this forgiveness, God commanded Jonah to follow through with faithfulness. True repentance suggests that we won’t only sorry for what we’ve done, but will also make the necessary effort to do rightly again. Jonah still had to do what he formerly did not want to do.

Therefore, Beloved, it is better to do the right thing from the beginning. Take it to heart and always examine yourself to know whether you’re walking uprightly or not. If we don’t humble ourselves to admit our faults, God will rebuke us for the sake of repentance. Yet God does all these things out of love, for mercy’s sake.

Look also at Nineveh itself. They worshipped foreign gods and were wicked before the Lord. As they were under the threat of destruction, God sent Jonah for their salvation. When Jonah warned them to repent, they did, and God forgave them and relented from harm. If they had not repented, God assuredly would have destroyed them as He had said. God cannot lie, and He said would have destroyed them.

Therefore, Beloved, when something bad comes upon you, search your heart first. God is a God of mercy and brings these things for mercy’s sake. But if you

don’t repent, God will follow through with His word. We read that He chastises us, and the Lord will not relent unless we repent.

So when a trial comes, first pray and ask the Lord if there is anything you have done wrong. Pray that He will open your eyes and reveal truth to you. Then, if something comes to mind, repent immediately. But if not, then realize that sometimes bad things happen to good people. Yet even then, God uses these things to grow His children.

No matter what happens, God will hold you through it all. But if you’re being disciplined for sin, He won’t hold you unless you repent. If you search your heart before God and have a clean conscience, however, then know that the Lord will use this situation for a greater good.

He will hold you through everything if you’re willing to run to Him. If you don’t run to Him, how can your Daddy embrace you in His arms? Take time to spend with Him. Be alone with Him and rest in His arms. Let His love cover you, and His Spirit release you.

Be alone with God and release the issues of your heart to Him. He loves you and cares for you, so share your heart with Him. Let Him lift you up and give you joy in the most impossible moments. He is able to do this if you’re willing to let Him.

But unless you seek Him, He can’t hold you. You have to let Him hold you, for receiving His comfort is a choice of your heart. He is a relational God and calls you to seek Him. He has already stretched His hand out to you; now you need to stretch yours back toward Him.

Seek Him and be blessed in His love. No matter how much it feels as if He isn’t there, He has never left you. Rather, He has been waiting right by your side. Beloved, do not weep alone, but instead let God hold you. He is standing next to you—so throw yourself in His arms! Cry in them, and He will comfort you. But if you refuse to seek Him, then you’re in sin. We are called to seek the Lord always, in everything. Even as it is written,

“Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore!” Psalm 105:4

Always seek God. When life is good, seek God and rejoice in Him! When life is bad, seek God and rejoice in Him! His Spirit will comfort you, and His joy will strengthen you.

God cares about everything you go through. Before time began He knew what

would happen to you. He knew every circumstance that would come on your life. He knew how you would respond to life and how it would respond to you. He has been waiting for thousands of years, since Creation, for these things to happen. He has known what would happen and has patiently waited to hold you through it all.

It's been in His heart to comfort you all this time. He has been waiting for thousands of years to love you, cherish you, comfort you, and embrace you. He loves you with an unrelenting, passionate, and eternal love. His love is the rock we stand on. Remember that when darkness covers you and makes your vision fade, His love is the fire that lights your way. When you're broken, turn to God, and His love will be a river of joy flowing from your heart.

God will always cherish you, and nothing will ever change His heart for you. Nothing will ever separate you from His love. God would pass through heaven and earth, forcing all things out of His way, just for a moment with you.

He loves you and will never stop pursuing you. He is head over heels for you! You're His precious little baby and His special treasure. He will always hold you; He will never turn you away! Sometimes God will snatch you up in His arms to comfort you, and sometimes you need to seek Him and give Him your heart. But in all things, learn to trust in Him.

Lean on Him and trust in His mighty hand. God will give you strength and will deliver you from everything that comes your way. When you received Him as your Lord and Savior, you did not receive Him to save you only once, at Judgment. When Christ became your Savior, He became your salvation in *everything*.

God has promised to deliver you from the hardest circumstances and to raise you up from the murkiest pits. There is nothing too difficult for Him, and He can bring salvation to you in a day. Therefore, put your trust in Him and lay your heart to rest in Him.

If salvation doesn't come in a day, God has His reasons for it—reasons that could include your growth. But no matter what, believe He is good, and be mindful of any lessons He may be trying to teach you through the circumstances. Let Him comfort and hold you. Run to Him and seek Him, that He may grow you, treasure you, and deliver you from everything that comes your way.

God Does All Things Out of Love

Now the question is: Why does God allow bad things to happen in the first place? What's His plan? What is He trying to do?

God does all things out of love, and there is nothing that He brings on you that hasn't been built within the framework of love. Now, not every trial is God's desire for you. Sometimes people do evil things to each other. Yet if we are good to follow His Holy Spirit rather than pave our own path in life, we will abide under the protection of His wing. Nevertheless, sometimes people are wicked. In this, God will save you if you continue earnestly in His Spirit.

God, with careful consideration and much forethought, decided to permit bad circumstances for a greater good. For those who don't have Christ, there is no greater good that comes out of the bad things in life. If they don't find Christ, there's nothing eternally good that comes from it; they only suffer.

But for those who are the children of God, everything has purpose for greater good. Even as it is written,

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

We know this, but it can be a hard thing to realize during a painful experience. What good could come from cancer? What good could possibly come from the loss of a loved one? What good could come from the loss of a young child? The loss itself isn't good, but what God chooses to do with the circumstance is good.

Yet remember that God will restore you when you stand before Him. Remember that He lost His Son to gain you. Then, in the end, He raised His Son and likewise will raise you. He gained you and received back His Firstborn, whom He lost.

I once knew of a family who lost their son to a drunk driver. Rather than be mad at God or at the young man who killed their child, they chose to forgive him and love him. Both the mother and father met with this young man on a consistent basis and ministered to him in prison. They poured out the love of God on him, and eventually he broke down and gave his life to Christ. He ended up becoming like family to them, and by the time he left prison, the young man who had killed their son had become their son.

This situation is the same as what the Father endured. His Son was murdered on

a cross because of your sin, but in exchange for His Son, He received you as His child. Beloved, this is the power of the love of God: forgiveness. No one can imagine how good can come from evil, but nothing is impossible for God.

It is impossible to imagine what kind of good could ever come out of losing your child. Under normal circumstances, there is nothing good that can come from it. But God is so powerful, so wonderful, and so loving that He is willing and able to work it together for good.

Job experienced the loss of everything. He lost his livelihood, his wealth, all of his children in a day, and even his own wife in some respects. Although the Scriptures do not say that he lost his wife, she cursed him and turned against him in his most painful moment of life. Rather than hold him, she became bitter and blamed him, wishing he would die. So in a manner of speaking, he lost her also, because he lost her love.

Even his friends turned against him and accused him of sin, even though they couldn't figure out what his sin was. Rather than being comforted, he was tormented. For all his torment, rather than comfort him, his friends tortured him. Instead of love, he received cursing and deeper brokenness. It was as if, when he asked for a refreshing drink, someone gave him gall to drink. Like Jesus on the cross, who said, "I thirst," but received a sponge full of vinegar.

In the end of all of Job's suffering, God gave him everything back, twice over, and he received a child for every child he had lost. Then he went on to live so long that he saw four generations of his offspring. Remember that His children were already old enough to live on their own when he lost them. He called himself one of the "aged" and one of the "elders" as he sat among his friends who ridiculed him. Yet God gave him so much life that he saw his great-great grandbabies!

Indeed, God blessed Job. As the Scriptures recount,

"And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." Job 42:10

And through Job's situation, we see that God is compassionate. As we also read,

"Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." James 5:11

God restored Job after he prayed for those who persecuted him in the worst

moments of his life. When Job ask God to forgive them, and after he sacrificed for their sins, God restored Job. Job acted like Jesus in that he not only forgave his persecutors but also sought forgiveness for them and sacrificed for them.

When you choose to give God the glory, and love and forgive all of those who hurt you bitterly in the midst of your deepest, most horrible moments, God refreshes you. It is refreshing to forgive others, no matter how horrible they've been to you. No matter what *you've* done or where in life *you* have come from, God has loved you and forgiven you, and He has also suffered for your sin.

When you can come to terms with forgiveness, righteousness, love, and faith in a God who is always good, you'll find yourself being strengthened by Him in the most difficult moments of life. God doesn't allow bad things to happen in order to hurt you, but He does use them for good—to give you eternal life and grow you.

I once knew of a woman who suffered an unthinkable tragedy. She was pregnant with a baby who was a few months from being born. The doctors took an ultrasound and found that the baby was not forming properly in her womb. The doctor pulled her aside, and because they didn't know how else to explain it to her, he told her bluntly, "I want you to take a picture of yourself with your belly because this is the last time you're going to see your baby alive." She was astonished, but the doctor continued, "Your baby is forming in your womb without a brain."

The child only had a brain stem as it was forming in her womb. It is impossible for anyone to live with only that portion of the brain. At most, an infant with a brain stem lives for a couple months outside the womb and then dies. But even that's rare because such infants usually pass away at birth.

In the end she gave birth to a baby girl and asked God for a miracle. God answered her because that girl lived for nine years before she finally passed away. It was a miracle the doctors couldn't explain. The child should have died at a few months of age but managed to live for years.

Her girl lived, had joy, loved, and was a blessing to her mother. But in the ninth year, she deteriorated and passed away. It had been impossible for her to live past a few months old, but with God all things are possible. Her mother had hoped her daughter would live a full life since God had created this miracle for her, but in the end she lost her child. However, rather than being mad at God for the whole situation—watching her baby suffer for nine years, then losing her—she chose to rejoice.

She felt so blessed to have had her daughter that long, whereas most parents would be grieved that they had lost a child. As her child lay on her deathbed, with tears in her eyes the woman said, “I believe my baby girl came into this world for the sake of love. Having her and serving her helped me understand love and the nature of it. God made my baby live for nine years. It was a miracle! God created my baby for love.”

This woman didn’t only have to deal with the death of her child. She suffered from the time of her pregnancy and for nine years after her baby’s birth. She had to deal with the painful thought of her child dying in the womb. Then, when the baby was born, she had to deal with the worry that at any moment her child would die. She held onto hope, but her hope wasn’t strong because it was impossible for her child to live.

While her girl was an infant, she would hold the baby, look into her eyes, and say in her heart, “This is my last day with my baby.” But those days turned into weeks, and the weeks turned into years. God blessed her, yet she still suffered.

She had to serve her child day after day. Her baby lived and had basic functions, and even limited communicated. Nonetheless, she had to suffer watching her child struggle through life and with mental disabilities.

Then, when she had hope that her child would live against all odds, she had to watch her baby deteriorate back into the mental state in which she was born. What little she had with her daughter slipped from her fingers a little more, day after day.

This woman didn’t have to suffer losing her child once in death; she had to suffer losing her child every day. She thought she had lost her in the womb. She thought she would lose her every day after her birth. Then, when she had hope that her daughter would live, she lost her again when her mind deteriorated beyond being able to communicate at all. She lost her little by little, day after day, until her own baby couldn’t remember her anymore. Then she finally lost her when her daughter passed away.

But this woman didn’t curse God. Instead she said, “God gave me this baby so that I would understand the nature of God’s love.” She was glad she had gotten the chance to love her baby, and she was glad that God had taught her such a valuable lesson through having this child. She lost her beautiful girl, but she had the joy of knowing where her baby was going. From God she came; to God she returned. The woman was also comforted knowing that one day she’d be with her baby again.

This woman had the right heart. God didn't have to give her the baby in the first place. It could have passed away in her womb. But God gave her this child, and in the end she didn't curse God for her situation. She blessed Him and thanked Him.

We likewise ought to worship God on our knees through our most horrible trials. No matter how hard it is, no matter how difficult it is, we should never curse God. Even Job fell on his face and worshipped the Lord after losing his children. God is always good, no matter what, and He gives us all things for love's sake. He does all things out of love, even when it doesn't make sense.

Even when it seems as if nothing good at all can come from the situation, God is still able to make good come from evil. Remember that God spoke into the darkness and created light. What would make you think He couldn't do the same for your circumstances in life?

God created the light in this dark world, and He created light in our evil hearts, giving us salvation. His love can illuminate the darkness of any situation that overshadows you.

There is nothing too difficult or too hard for Him. He makes good come out of every trial. He turns every heart-break, every tear, every broken moment, and every shattered life into beauty.

He works everything together for good even when it seems impossible to do so. So in the end, life isn't really about what happens to us but, rather, about how we take what comes our way. Are we trusting in the Lord or wavering in our faith in His promises? Are we dwelling on the negativity of life or releasing our hearts to God? Are we sitting in His presence and abiding in His Spirit to be comforted by Him, or are we hiding in a corner and ignoring God while we lick our wounds? Beloved, life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you take it.

I once met a man who was an airline paramedic. His job was to attend to every emergency situation on the aircraft. Once a woman brought her baby with her on a vacation and was on the flight back when, out of nowhere, her baby's face turned blue. The child was unresponsive, and there was no apparent reason for the situation. It wasn't choking on anything; it just turned blue. When this man inspected the child, he found that its heart had stopped.

He spent forty-five minutes crying out to God, trying to resuscitate the baby before he had to give up. Afterward he had to hand this broken woman her dead

child and explain to her why he couldn't make her baby live.

Later that day he needed to go to the DMV. He was in a rush and didn't have time to change, so he was still wearing his paramedic's uniform. And as he was standing in line, the woman serving at the counter was demonstrating a horrible attitude. She was snappy with everyone and had a short temper.

When he finally came up to her, she snapped at him for no reason. He asked a simple question, and she blew up and yelled at him. So he calmly said to her, "Ma'am, I'm a paramedic for the airline industry. I just got done trying to resuscitate a baby no more than ten months old. Then, after forty-five minutes of my struggling, and begging God to make it live, it died. No matter how much I wanted to make this baby live, there was nothing I could do. Then I had to be the one to explain to its mother why I couldn't make her baby live. So how bad could your day really be? Come on, tell me: How bad could it really be? Do you really need to be treating people like this?"

This woman stared at him in awe, with tears streaming down her face. She didn't even say a word, and from that moment forward she was a lot nicer to everyone.

Life really is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you take it. There are some things that change us, like the loss of a limb. That would be the ten percent. But how we use that to rest in God and glorify Him is the ninety percent.

Sometimes when bad things happen, we let them get the best of us and we take it out on others. But when we do this, it's like throwing pebbles in a still pond. Think about it for a moment: When the stone hits the water, it makes a ripple. Well, that ripple is the negativity you exhibit toward one person, who will give it to countless others around him or her. Like a stone thrown in a pond, the negativity will spread continuously outward, beginning with you who threw the first stone. In the end you didn't hurt the one person on whom you took out your frustrations, but countless people.

But if you choose love and kindness even when you're hurting, the ripple will lead them to Christ. It will begin with you sharing the love of Christ and then spread continuously outward. So, what kind of a person do you want to be? One who grieves and takes his or her pain out on others? Or one who rests in Christ, is comforted by His love, and goes forward to share that love with others?

Yet we tend to justify our unloving behaviors because we're broken. But love should lead us in everything! God brings everything upon us out of love, with

careful forethought for our growth. Therefore, be careful to be the example of Christ no matter what's happening to you. Love others unconditionally and thank God for your circumstances because they mean eternal life for you.

Thank Him also that these events will have their end and God will restore you completely when you stand before Him. Pray for wisdom and understanding, that you may grow in what God gives you. Everything God gives you, He gives you so that you may learn to trust in Him and lean on Him. Even as it is written,

"And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." Deuteronomy 8:2–3

Beloved, your life and substance are wrapped up in the words of God's mouth. He is God—who are we to question Him? If He says you must be poor, it will happen. If He says you'll be rich, it will happen. Whatever proceeds from His mouth happens.

Remember that when He created the heavens and the earth, He spoke to them and they formed whatever He desired. His power is in His word, and remember that from the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. His word proceeds from His love, and there is no power like His love.

For by His love He has overturned the grave and changed the hearts of evil men. He has made their crooked ways straight and changed a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. Therefore, Beloved, remember that you are God's and your life consists of everything God says. Even as Jesus proclaimed,

"Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

"But He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but be every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."'" Matthew 4:3–4

Jesus was starving yet didn't seek to create His own miracle. Rather, He waited on the Father, to live according to His will. Whenever you fall into need, whenever something hard happens, God does these things so that you would know you live according to every word that proceeds from His mouth.

It’s not your choice to have what you want; it’s His choice to give you everything you have and to lead you to become everything you will become. When you suffer and see God’s hand save you, then you’ll understand that you have no power to save yourself but, rather, you are saved by the word and love of God, in which you have faith.

The lives of those around you are taken away because that is what God decided. Our lives are wrapped up in His word whether He is our Lord or not. God chooses when we shall live, be born, and die. But that God has always had power over death is evident, for we read,

“Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, “You shall not eat of it”:

“‘Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.’” Genesis 3:17–19

God gave us eternal life from the beginning, but due to sin He took that away. It was always in His power to give life and take it away, and He chose to take it. Indeed, God requires our souls, as we also read:

“But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’” Luke 12:20

One day God will speak and your life will be over. “Come home,” He will say, and it will happen. Your very life exists because He spoke. Everything you have is given to you because God says it should be. Whatever providence you have came first from the mouth of God, and it was sent forth by Him to give you joy.

Remember also that God appoints our pains for our growth and edification. He uses them for His glory and brings a greater good from them, even when we think it’s impossible. God allows your sufferings so that you would know that you will live by every word of God. You live by God’s providence, and all that you have is from Him.

If you’re struggling financially and feel that you need money, you’re wrong. You don’t need money, but for God to provide for your needs. Beloved, seek the Lord and He will save you; do not seek to save yourself with the things of this world. God will show you what you should do, that you may find the perfect

circumstance to save you. If you need money and a job, God will lead you to the job. Stop sending out a bunch of applications, and instead surrender the matter to God. Pray that He will lead you to the job He intended for you.

God has your life planned, and it's best if you humble yourself by surrendering to His plan. But poverty leads us to fear, and those who fear aren't walking by faith. From where does faith come? From His word! So seek His word, that you may live by faith and have victory over your trials. As it is written,

"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith." 1 John 5:4

Remember that if God had not spoken, you wouldn't have life. As water and food are necessary for the body, even so the word of God is necessary for the soul. We must live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and honor Him in every action we take. We must be obedient to His every word and express His love in everything we do. Faith comes by His word, and righteousness is faith in motion. True righteousness is obedience to His word.

God gives us these things in order to teach us to live according to His word. He gives us these things for the sake of eternal life, that He may bring about a greater good for us. God does all things out of love. In the framework of love, He built you. And with love in mind, He allows your heart to be sweetly and gently broken.

When a bone is broken, it heals stronger. God allows your heart to be broken at its weak points so that when it heals, it may be stronger. God permits your heart to break so that in these weak places you'll learn to make Christ your strength. Then you'll never break again.

Therefore, Beloved, rejoice in the love of God. Everything He does is for love's sake. Learn to rejoice in the midst of your trials. Suffering has its place, but in every circumstance we should put on the joy of the Lord. Beloved, turn your hurting into rejoicing. Overcome pain with praise. Worship God and His Spirit will heal your heart.

Remember this and walk in it. Remember that He loves you and learn to respond rightly to His love.

Responding Rightly to His Love

We understand that God loves us, but we don't always understand what His love looks like. In the Scriptures we read that God doesn't withhold any good thing from those who love Him. But what we consider to be good and what God considers good are different. If we always know what is best, then why would we need a Counselor called the Holy Spirit?

Sometimes good can be hidden in the shadow of bad. Sometimes the trials of this life are blessings in disguise. God is willing to give us the hurt for a greater healing. If a trial weren't to produce something greater, then God wouldn't give it. He is only interested in giving what's best for the growth of His children.

It takes this understanding to respond properly to His love. Since His love may be disguised by a trial, it can be difficult to respond to it appropriately. When something difficult happens, we tend to become broken, grieved, or angry. But as we discussed earlier, we should rather rejoice, knowing that hardship produces the fruits of the Spirit in us. These fruits are the first-fruits of eternal life. Therefore, we should rejoice greatly, knowing that His love is at work in us to save us.

When you lose a loved one, it may not seem as if the love of God is working in your life. But we, as naturally self-centered creatures, only think about God's works from our narrow perspective. Since when has it been all about ourselves? Can't God show love to those around us as well? He is showing the one who died His love, through giving them peace. Is He not showing love to a good person when he or she dies? The Lord says "yes!"—that it is a good thing. As it is written,

"The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." Isaiah 57:1–2

Hence, we have the saying "Rest In Peace." Everything God does is done love. Even when He takes us home, He is showing us love and delivering us from the evil of this world. He does it for peace, and we should have joy for others around us who have found that peace.

Since God has given peace to the deceased, we should have the heart to let them go. Yes, we should be grieved; but Beloved, let's grieve in God's arms. When

hardship or pain comes rushing in, rather than blame God, we should run straight into His arms.

Even when the circumstances of life look terrible to us, God still uses all things for good. If there weren't a greater good to be had through it, He wouldn't allow it to happen to His children. There is no good in the suffering itself, but there is good to be brought about from it that is greater than the means to get there.

Therefore, we should have a heart that is not only willing to suffer in Christ but is also joyful in the sufferings of life. Rejoice in the Lord and know that He is good. His love endures forever, and His kindness to all generations.

He shall fill your heart with plenty and cover you with joy. Peace shall be in your house, and the Lord shall walk in your midst. In due time you'll see Him face to face, and His glory will shine for all generations and forevermore.

Therefore, Beloved, be patient and wait for the faithfulness of the Lord. He will bring it in His due and proper time, and you will see it with your eyes and handle it with your hands. Be faithful to follow God in everything, but have patience with Him as you wait for your salvation.

Respond rightly to His love and recognize His love at work in and around you. Pray for wisdom to recognize His love and He will give you what you desire. Ask Him to open your eyes to see His love working around you and He will do it. This will build your faith and bless your heart as you begin to realize how much your Father adores you.

There is nothing God wouldn't give for you. Consider what He gave at the cross! Beloved, there is nothing He hasn't already given for you. Therefore, be submissive to Him and allow His hands to form you. Though His fingers may sweetly break you, His hands will gentle caress you and hold you through it all. He will comfort you as you grow in Him.

Then, when you have grown, you'll find that some trials won't repeat themselves. When you grow in the lessons God is teaching you, there will be no more reason for those lessons to happen. As a result, you'll see trials less often and peace will begin to abound. Beloved, Jesus didn't give His life to give you turmoil; rather, He gave His life to save you and give you peace.

So give to Him what He gave for you: Give Him your life. Though there are sufferings in this life, He has promised us eternal peace when we're at home with Him. Even as nothing in heaven or earth can separate us from His love, nothing shall separate us from the peace He will give us. Have faith and He will

strengthen your heart.

Never be angry with Him, but be patient with Him and wait for His timing. In everything, God has determined good for you. Some trials we won't be saved from in this life, such as the loss of a loved one. Yet God will comfort us, and in time to come He will turn these trials into rejoicing.

Remember this and know that you're cherished, treasured, and set free by the love of God. He will save you from everything that comes your way. Simply run now into your Daddy's arms and let Him hold you through it all. Let Him embrace you. Sit quietly in His presence as He comforts you softly in His love.

When you sit in His presence and His Spirit is upon you, His peace will overshadow you. His joy shall overtake you, and your heart, which dripped brokenness, will become a fountain of rejoicing.

For the Holy Spirit is our fountain of joy, and His love is our encouragement. Surrender to Him and submit to Him. He knows what's best and only gives you what is best, even though it doesn't always look that way. He knows better than we do.

His eyes are above all things, searching the good and evil. His gaze pierces through flesh and bone, through steel and stone. There is nothing He cannot see; whether past, present, or future, God knows and sees all things. Therefore, Beloved, He understands what you need and what those around you need. He will not withhold it from you, but will give to you according to what is most important.

If you've ever suffered in poverty, know then that God was enriching your spirit. In such circumstances you must lean upon the Lord for strength. Do not run from God, and Beloved, do not fret—it only causes harm. Rather, walk in faith, and the Lord your God shall save you even as He has promised. He will lead you to what you need. Listen carefully for His word and His Spirit will direct your steps.

But remember that His timing is almost never our timing; for His understanding is always above ours, and He will give you perfectly what you need. Not only for the here and now, but also for tomorrow and forever.

God counts your soul as more important than your flesh. Take this to heart and know that He is giving you eternal life. Though things may be hard, God speaks in love. Though life may be difficult, God will be there to comfort you.

God has known everything that would happen to you. He always knew what would hurt you and has been waiting all this time by your side to comfort you. So just turn around and He will be there, ready to love you and comfort you.

When something unexpectedly bad happens, do not hide from Him and do not sit in fear. Rather, Beloved, rise up. Yes, lift up your face, for your salvation draws near.

If we don't respond rightly to His love, we'll never gain the lesson He's teaching us. We must lean on Him through every trial, for it is through these trials that we learn to make God our strength.

In your weakness He is your strength, and your trials are your weaknesses. When He is your strength, His glory rests upon you. He is glorified when you are humbled. He is honored when your life is humiliated. But He will lift up your face, for God honors those who honor Him. And if your life honors Him, then what shall He give to you? A reward, no doubt. Therefore, continue in faith and wait on His faithfulness.

When trials come, have faith that He will save you. Then walk in love toward Him and pray for wisdom in every circumstance. Pray that God will reveal His will in the situation. Pray that He will show you how to glorify Him in your pain. Pray that He will reveal any lessons He may be trying to show you through the situation.

Though pruning is not pleasant, but rather painful, it's the best method for producing the most fruit. Remember that God also prunes you so that you may produce the fruit of eternal life through your tribulations. As the Scriptures say,

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." 2 Corinthians 4:7–8

The life of God is manifested in you when you're walking through a trial. Before Israel entered the Promised Land, first they had a desert experience during which they questioned God. But we should respond rightly to His love, knowing that everything is done for the sake of the greater good. Believe this and learn from the hand of God. He is having mercy on you even when you feel broken.

God will break you sweetly, but His hands will never crush you. His hands are for caressing, cherishing, and holding you. God will refine you through fire, but He has promised that you'll never be burned. When the tribulation fire heats up, the life of Christ is manifested in you.

The trials Christians go through lead them to life. But the trials encountered by people who are of the world leave them with nothing but brokenness. Their trials are worthless and meaningless. For they never grow in Christ or find eternal life through these trials because they don't have God. But you have God, and He is your strength to live in death. Therefore, when *you* are afflicted, the glory of Christ is revealed. His life and the power of salvation are manifested through your hardships—and the world sees this and stands in awe of God.

There have been times when I've gone through many trials. Yet God called me to rejoice in Him during those times. When others, who were of the world, saw me rejoicing, they asked me how I could possibly have joy. This opened the door for sharing Christ, and they were given the gospel. When the life of Christ is manifested in us, it brings the hope of salvation to others. Jesus Christ was crucified, and it led to life for all who would believe in Him.

When we carry around the cross of Christ, others are convicted and are drawn to the love of God. In carrying our cross, we shouldn't mope about in sorrow but, instead, rejoice exceedingly. That way, when they see the joy of God upon us, they may wonder what we have that's so different—and then find salvation as well.

Pray for wisdom in your circumstances. Pray for an open heart, that God would teach you. Learn from the circumstances of life and carry the lessons with you always, that you may not have to relearn old lessons.

If we don't learn the lessons from the trials at hand, we may have to go through a similar trial again until we learn what God is teaching us. Therefore, be diligent to learn it now that the days of rejoicing may come sooner.

Keep all things in prayer and find support from your brethren. Sometimes we need the physical touch of Jesus. This we can find through our brethren as they portray the Lord in their actions.

God will work physically through your brethren, to comfort you, encourage you, and take care of you. You don't ever have to go through anything alone. You have God, and you have your family in Christ. You are loved!

Seek the Lord and let Him lift you up. Submit to His love even when it hurts.

Love Him back unconditionally and worship Him in the midst of suffering. He will cause you to rejoice again. Just wait on the Lord and wait for His faithfulness.

Remaining Faithful and Being Strengthened by Him

God has always loved you. He has always remained faithful for you. In everything you have ever gone through, He has always been there, not only to hold you but also to carry you through it all. No matter what you're going through, God is still good. Can you believe this? Can you still practice it? Will you be like Job, who fell on his knees and worshipped God, accepting the bad with the good?

God has always been faithful and has never stop loving us. Everything He does is done through love. Knowing this, we should also remain faithful. God has always loved us and deserves our devotion.

During hardship, Satan steps in to tempt us against the Lord. He tempts us to be angry with God—to be impatient with Him. Rather than learning the lesson at hand, we are tempted to forsake Him or to bring harm on ourselves or others. Satan tempts us to be divided from our brethren so that when we're secluded in our wrath and brokenness, he may tempt us into deeper sin. But Beloved, do not take your frustrations out on God or your brethren; rather, remain unified in His Spirit and glorify Him in your conduct.

It can be difficult to find a place of peace in the middle of a storm. It can be hard to have rational thought in deep brokenness. When it's difficult to think rationally, we're more likely to hurt ourselves or others in the heat of the moment.

Yet brokenness is the perfect time to draw near to the Lord. When we can no longer think rationally because of deep hurt, this opens a door to let God do the thinking for us. He should always be doing the thinking for us, anyway, because we should always be living according to the mind of Christ.

However, the only way to do this is to remain faithful to follow Him and lean on His love. Let Him comfort you and cherish you. Meet with Him in the secret place, constantly, while you suffer. You need to be with Him in the secret place because your heart is distracted with sorrow. It is so much easier to be distracted by other things around you when you're distracted in your heart. The outward distractions have more strength to keep us from meditating on Christ when the inward distractions are screaming so loudly.

So find a place of peace and sit in His love. Remove the distractions from around you and go to the One who loves you most. He will comfort you, cherish you,

and nurture your heart back to joy. He is always good and will carry you through every storm of life. When things get hard, life can feel as if we're floating on a raft in raging sea. But when the waves are tossing, you remember this saying:

"God is my ship in a raging sea; He calms the storms inside of me. He carries me when I can't see. This is what it's like to be loved by His Majesty.

"He'll hold me in His arms, and He'll hold me tight. He'll be my light through the darkest night. When I'm hurt, there's nothing left to fear because the love of Christ is drawing near."

God has always loved you and has always remained faithful to you. So remain faithful to Him. In trials and hardship our hearts are tested before God. Remember that we're called have unconditional love toward everyone. For some reason, sometimes, people forget that this unconditional love also needs to be toward God.

Just because the winds of life aren't blowing favorably upon you doesn't mean that God stopped loving you and doesn't mean that we should stop loving God. When we question God, we're not loving Him. He has never done anything wrong, and to question Him is to accuse Him in our hearts. Our love for Him must remain unconditional, and our faith must remain unwavering.

God never stops loving you. Continue in your faith and He'll deliver you. His timing is not the same as ours. After we have suffered a while, that our faith may be proven to be more precious than gold refined by the fire, He restores us and delivers us according to His faithfulness and loving-kindness. Remember this and walk in faith, and in the meantime pray for wisdom.

In particular, pray that God will make sense of your trials. If there is anything that He wants you to learn through them, it would be good to ask Him to convey that message to you. It would be good to pray for understanding so that you can grow and remain pleasing to Him.

We must love Him unconditionally. True unconditional love suggests that no matter what we go through, we'll remain faithful to Him—similar to the marriage vows: "for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, while forsaking all others until death makes you closer." No matter what, keep loving God and let nothing change your heart for Him. Keep believing and pray for strength. Pray for wisdom because trials are for our growth. Even as Peter said,

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have

been grieved by various trials, 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…" 1 Peter 1:6–7

And also,

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." 1 Peter 4:12–13

James also exhorts us that we should be patient in all things. But when we're in a trial, who is our patience with, ultimately? With God.

When things don't go our way, we need to learn to be patient with God. We are His servants, and He bought us at a price. Our lives are not our own, and we ought to remain faithful to our Lord and Master.

He does cherish you, and He will give you what you need even when you feel as if you don't need it. Not always, but sometimes, we need a trial to grow. Sometimes we need a trial for someone else around us to find Christ. Remember that Jesus suffered the trial of the cross and, through it, you were saved. In this we are becoming like Christ as we learn to carry our own crosses.

It hurts Him to watch you hurt, so it *is* a sacrifice for Him to watch you suffer. Yet He gives you what is best for your growth because He is always faithful to love you and give you the things that make for eternal life.

He will give you what you need to grow in Him, to secure and continually cement your salvation. He will give you peace in time to come, but only when it is most appropriate for your faith. Learn whatever lesson He has to give so you can move on from this trial and into the place of peace.

But in the meantime, while you suffer, lean on Christ. Let Him hold you and strengthen you. Not everything is in our control, although we would like it to be. Yet everything is in His control, and He always knows what's best. God will carry you through it, but pray for strength while you're in the midst of it.

Don't only pray for strength to make it through the trial, however; pray for strength to rejoice in the midst of it. Pray for strength to rejoice in Him and to glorify His name—for He is deserving of this.

Furthermore, Beloved, He has gone before you to suffer all things for your sake. Therefore, as you partake in the cross with your Savior, remain faithful to Him

and let Him strengthen you in His love. He knows what you're going through! He suffered it two thousand years ago. He knows your pain and understands it perfectly. Yet He does call you to rejoice in Him.

This is why is written to "count it all joy" when we fall into trials. That is so much easier said than done; but as we grow in Him, His Spirit will lift up our hearts and we'll rejoice even in the most impossible situations.

Jesus likewise counted it as joy to face the cross. He despised the shame but knew that what He would gain from the cross was greater than the cross itself. And what did He gain? You. He counted you to be greater than His suffering. How much more should we count Him worth suffering for?

It's obvious that He didn't want to go through it—hence His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. Who would *want* to suffer? The very thought of it made Him sweat blood, but He persisted in faithfulness. It wasn't that He wanted to suffer; rather, He desired the gift of God that came after it. We likewise receive a reward when we suffer. Through suffering we find comfort in the midst of it and a better relationship with the Lord in the end.

But that Jesus had joy when approaching the cross was evident. As it is written,

"…looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, *who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross*, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.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, for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.'

"If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons." Hebrews 12:2–8

Yet is every trial for chastening? Yes and no. As we discussed before, not all discipline is laid upon us because we sinned, but instead it may be for the sake of growth. In this we learn to be self-disciplined, by submitting to the discipline of the Father. Likewise, Jesus didn't commit any sin when He endured the cross.

Yet the scripture to which we referred goes on to discuss chastening. Why would Jesus be chastened over sin if He didn't commit any? But for the sake of all, He found the discipline of the cross. Likewise, it is for the sake of love that God calls you to carry your cross.

Yet remember that not every trial is God's discipline for you. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. Look at Job! There was no reason for his suffering. Rather, Satan inquired of the Lord, and God allowed Job's suffering to test him. God also restored double to Job and gave him children—one child for each he had lost. He gave him long life as well, that he should see all these children to the fourth generation. Yet Job didn't do anything deserving of a trial in the first place.

That's where Job's friends were wrong: They thought bad things only happen to bad people, but such is not the truth. They attacked Job in his innocence, condemning a man who needed tender loving-kindness and comfort.

Suffering exists in this world because of sin. It's not due to each individual's sin that he or she suffers, but as a result of the fact that sin exists, period. Yet remember: Although God disciplines us for sin, we don't always receive what we deserve.

For our sin we deserve wrath, but instead we have mercy. That's actually unfair! We deserve condemnation, but received love and a blessing. And that's the beauty of grace: It makes life unfair. This type of unfairness leads us to rejoice because through His grace we find salvation.

We were given an opportunity for repentance, an opportunity we didn't deserve. Christians are always getting what they don't deserve: God's grace. Why then would we be so upset that we receive some bad things we don't deserve? Doesn't good triumph over evil? Won't good overcome hardship? Beloved, in due time it will, for your Lord will comfort you.

Remember that while sin exists in this world, God cannot be where sin is. The two collide, resulting in the death of the sin. When Jesus walked the dust of the streets, He healed everyone who touched Him. He restored anyone who asked for it. He loved us and built us up in truth.

But since He departed, where has the healing gone? Some who ask for it receive it, but not everyone. If everyone did, then why do some Christians still die of cancer? When God is here, this world is blessed, and He restores this world. But when He leaves, brokenness ensues and takes over.

The Spirit of God is here on this earth, but God’s throne is not yet with men. When it is, He will destroy every worker of iniquity who has not sought out His mercy. When He returns, God will collide with sin, resulting in its death.

His blood will cover those who sought it, but those who haven’t will find His wrath. Yet those who’ve loved Him will be healed.

He will restore the broken, who have covered themselves with the blood of Christ, and He will comfort them. He will wipe their tears away and bless them with an abundance of peace—a peace that shall never be taken away, just as assuredly as His love shall never be taken away.

Remain faithful to Him, carry your cross, and let Him strengthen you in His love. He has gone before you, and He will hold you through it all. Sit in His love and you will be strengthened by His Spirit.

Take the time to come out from among the distractions around you and release your heart to God in the secret place. He will strengthen you during these times. If you feel as if you need more strength to make it through, then seek Him more frequently in the secret place. You will find that God will give you exceedingly and abundantly above what you ask or think. He will not just give you strength to make it through, but also strength to rejoice in Him and in His faithfulness.

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