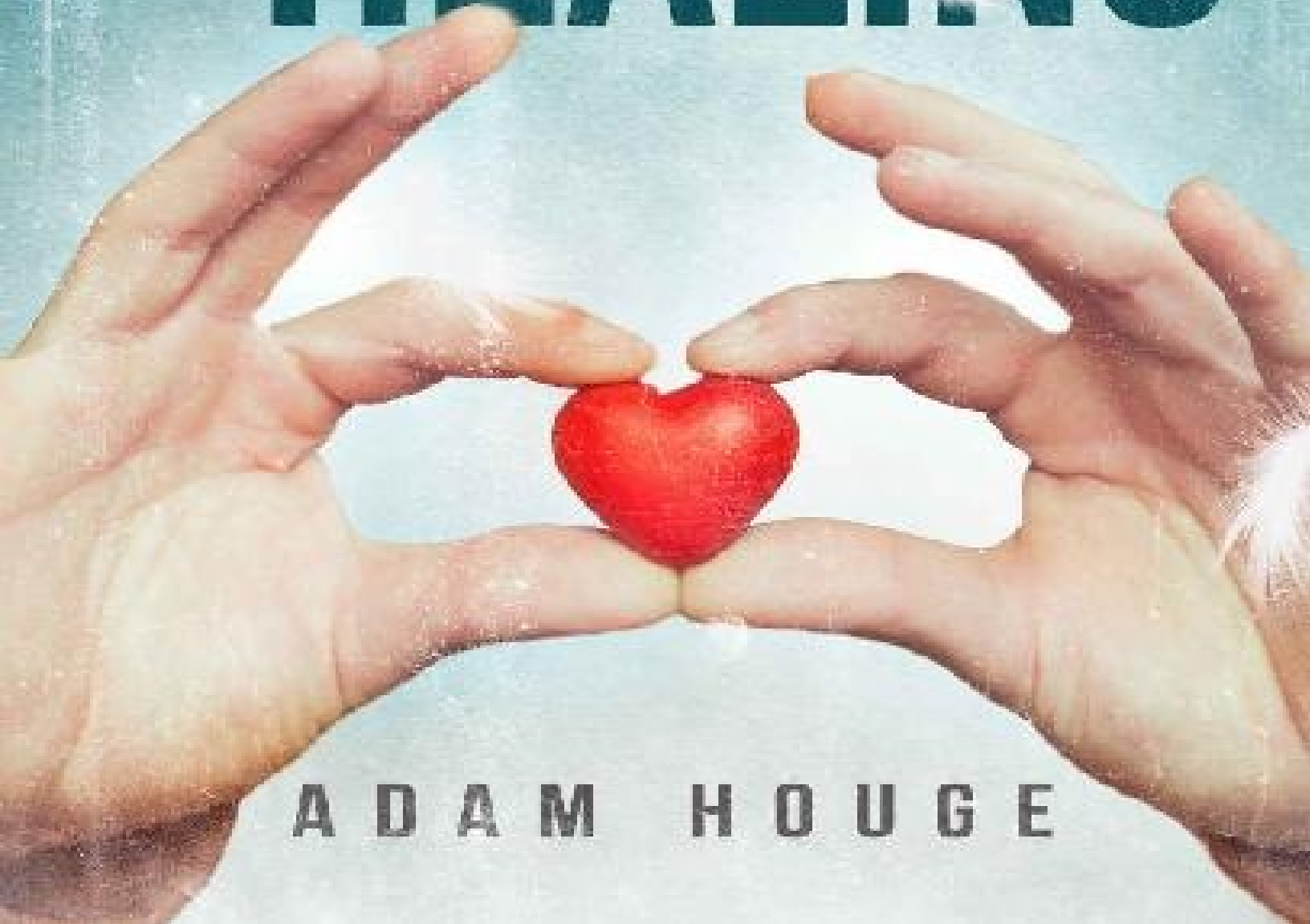
WHEN you NEED HEALING



ADAM HOUGE

When You Need Healing™

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Also by Adam Houge

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Embracing His Comfort

“But why did my daughter have to die?! How could God let this happen to me? A parent should never outlive his child!” Eric growled as he gnashed his teeth at his friend. He was grieving and looking for comfort but wasn’t finding the answers he wanted.

“I don’t know,” his friend replied. Then thinking he had an appropriate answer he continued, “but what I do know is that God works all things together for good. Romans 8:28. Read it. It’ll encourage you.”

The bridge of his friend’s nose nearly met Eric’s knuckles. But before he hit him Eric’s presence was suddenly pressed back by a group of nearby men, who could sense the tension snapping. “How can any good come out of my daughter’s death?!” he raged as the men pinned him against the wall.

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It had been a few weeks ago when he received the call. Eric was sitting at his desk, filing a few papers, when his phone rang.

“Hello, thank you for calling…”

“Eric…” his wife’s devastated voice interrupted. “It’s Julie.”

“Oh, hi honey! What’s wrong?”

“It’s August,” she replied. Eric continued to shuffle through a few more documents, then reached down to put them in the drawer.

“Oh, yeah? What’s wrong with my princess? I hope she isn’t sick. I promised I would take her out for ice cream today,” he said as the phone dangled between his ear and shoulder.

“August was at Maddie’s…” Julie paused for a moment, then when couldn’t restrain herself any further, she broke down. “Eric, August was hit by a drunk driver on the way home!”

“WHAT?” Eric shouted in horror. Several of his nearby coworkers glared at him for his noise. All of them were taking calls in the call center.

“Julie, how could this happen? It’s the middle of the day! Who drinks in the middle of the day?”

“I don’t know…” She started.

“Is she okay?” Eric asked, still in a panic.

“Eric, come home.”

“Julie! Is August okay?!”

But her answer came with tears. “Eric, just come home…”

“Julie! Tell me if my daughter is okay!” Eric barked. Then, after a moment, she answered.

“No.”

The vehicle August was in had been knocked into a street sign sideways at the small four-way stop. The sign had twisted and then punched into the vehicle through the window, and she had been impaled. The doctors wished they could say she had died quickly, but she didn’t. Her screams had been heard for at least fifteen minutes before she passed out from blood loss. By the time she had arrived in the emergency room, she was dead. Her passing had been slow and excruciating.

Now Eric was left wondering how God could allow his precious, beautiful little six-year-old girl to suffer so horribly before dying.

It was early in the year 2003 when I met Eric. It had been at least ten years since his tragedy, and you would never have been able to guess he had endured that. With time, God provided him healing and made him a comfort to others.

I was suffering in my own trial when I met him. I was struggling financially, and after rent and bills were paid, I was left with less than $40 per month for food. When I shared my situation with him, he had words of encouragement for me. After he told me about his daughter, I was in tears.

“How could you heal from something like that?” I asked him.

“Heal? I couldn’t heal. Not on my own, that is. It was God who healed me. I wasted so much time blaming Him for my problems. I admit I was mad at God. But when I decided to believe that He’s good no matter what happens to me, that’s when the healing began.”

He took a moment to pause as he thought about the details of his daughter’s death. A tear glinted off his cheek before he wiped his eye.

“I couldn’t have done it without Him,” he continued. “The Lord has done so much to love me and heal me.” He stopped again to cry as he grieved over his past mistakes. “I didn’t hate God. How could I? I mean, I’m His son. I love Him.

But I was so mad at Him—as if it were His fault. What was wrong with me?"

He turned to look me in the eyes. "You know what it all came down to? I was mad about the time I lost with my daughter. So I was given the option: Keep being mad at God for the time I had lost, or praise Him for the time I had with her."

His face was sprinkled with tears, but this time he wasn't ashamed of them. "I chose to thank God. I didn't deserve to have such a beautiful girl like August. She was my heart, and I lost my heart the day I lost her. But God gave my heart back to me, and He taught me to be grateful for the time I have with the people I love. Because you never know when you'll lose them."

I was speechless. There wasn't much I could say. I wanted to comfort him, but he had already found solace in Christ. Now he was sharing his story to comfort me in my trials. In fact, God used his story to comfort countless others.

"I want you to do something for me," he continued. "If you have kids go home and give them a hug. Be grateful for what I don't have. When God blesses you with something, be thankful for it while you have it. If you fall into a trial, remember how He's blessed you. God is always faithful. So remember His faithfulness and cling to it when things get hard. Because if He's been faithful before, He'll be faithful again."

I felt so blessed and inspired by him. I couldn't stop sitting in awe of his faith.

"I know where my daughter is," he continued boldly. "I feel so bad about the way she got there, but whether you suffer before you die or just die quickly, the point is that you die. You can't control how you go, and I had no control over my daughter's situation. So sometimes we just have to accept our circumstances and let God have control.

"Besides, the end result is always peace when it's in the Lord's hands. I know that as soon as she passed, her suffering was over. She's at peace waiting for me, and when I get there, I'll have my baby back forever."

The way in which Eric overcame his trial helped me overcome my minor trial. While my trial was a big deal to me, the devastating, heart-wrenching ordeal he had endured made my situation seem like nothing.

Death exists because of sin, the Bible tells us. It's not that we die the way we deserve for the sins we commit—as if that little girl deserved to go the way she did! Rather, it's that we live in a corrupted world, and suffering and unfairness

reign in this place because of sin. But God has given us a way out of this circumstance: Jesus. So embrace Him and let Him comfort you.

God is always there for you, holding you and embracing you through it all. You're never suffering alone. The Lord is with you, shedding a tear every time you do. He cares more about you than you could imagine, so don't let the pain push you away from Him.

Some people choose to bottle the pain inside. They shut down, and they close all the doors of their heart. They don't even release it to God. But if you pray, and release your hurting to Him, He will hear your prayer—and in time, in His perfect timing, He will bless you.

The End of Your Trial is Coming

God has determined a set time for your trial to end. He sees it in the distance and knows the day. All you have to do is keep in step with the Spirit of God.

Find comfort in His arms, but also take this time to sensitize yourself to His voice. God is the only one who knows the way out of the valley, so let Him lead you. Be attentive to His voice and swift to obey. Make the decisions He tells you to make. Take the steps He tells you to take.

When need overtakes you, it is only natural to fret. But resist the temptation to resolve your issue yourself, and instead rely on God. Who made Peter walk on water? Was it not the Lord? Even so, God will raise you up from your situation and make you walk on the waves of your suffering.

If you've lost a loved one, then obviously that trial won't go away. The best way forward is to find constant comfort in the Spirit of God.

No matter where you're at or what you're going through, there is no better time to rest in the Spirit and walk in Him. Follow His lead, and He will lift your heart up again.

Finding Healing

Everyone has suffered a moment in life that left him or her asking, “God, why did You let this happen to me?”

Uncertainty and brokenness can lead us to question why He permits evil. But He allows certain trials to happen in order to shape our character and help us to develop a deeper, more intimate relationship with Him. God’s hand can certainly stop the painful moments of life from happening, but the blessings He has for us in the end are greater than the means to get there. Even as it is written,

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Romans 8:18

God has so much more in store for you. Not only does He have blessings for you in the next life, but He also has them here for you now, today. These blessings involve a more intimate relationship with Him.

Now, some struggle with this. “How can I be encouraged by that? God will give me blessings one day, but I’m hurting now!”

When we reflect on His faithfulness and surrender to His embrace, however, we find comfort. But by sitting in the whirlpool of grief, we will drown ourselves in sorrow.

Wherever you’re at, you need to reach out to God. You must sit in His presence constantly. This is more than sitting quietly in the secret place; this is taking the time to abide in the Spirit all day long. Whether you’re working, taking care of children, driving a car, or lying in bed, be found praying and worshipping. By prayer you will receive the comfort and blessings of the Lord. By worshipping God during your suffering, you are showing yourself to be righteous, in that you believe God is worthy of praise no matter what you go through.

Even as Job did, so we must do:

“Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?’

“So Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he

has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’

“And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.’

“So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

“Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house; and a messenger came to Job and said, ‘The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided them and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’

“While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’

“While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’

“While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’

“Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.” Job 1:8–22

Job praised God in His suffering. Worship unleashes waves of joy that might otherwise not exist. It is not the action of worship itself that does this. Rather, it is the presence of God, which you experience while you praise.

God tests our faith through our trials. But Satan tempts us to blame God. Notice that the Lord permitted Job’s situation, but He wasn’t the one who created it—Satan was. So the devil comes along and destroys you without cause, then He tempts you to think it’s God’s fault.

“God could have stopped this. Why did He allow it to happen? Curse Him!” the devil would tell you. But in this, he testifies against himself. For he claims that

God deserves cursing for allowing trials to happen, yet the devil is the one who hurts you.

In a few cases, God's hand may be directly behind your trial. But this is only when He is disciplining you for sin. Examine your heart in such a case and repent. This is where Job's friends went wrong. The only trials of which they knew were from God's disciplining hand. And no wonder, since they were so unloving! Because of their incomplete knowledge, they accused Job of harboring a hidden sin. But God was merely testing Job, and sometimes bad things happen to good people.

Even though Job had suffered the loss of all his children and everything he owned, he didn't curse God. Rather, he worshipped the Lord, and we should keep the same heart. If we do so, God will speak in our favor as He did for Job. As we read,

"Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.'" Job 2:3

The devil incited God, and the Lord permitted it to test Job. God tested Job one more time after this, and Satan said,

"Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" Job 2:4–5

As we know, God later revealed Himself to Job in a whirlwind. Likewise, God will call out to you, not from the edge of the storm but from its center. While Satan may be the destroyer, you will find that in the middle of the tornado, God is there—ready to embrace you, love you, and restore you in His compassion.

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

Job had as many children the second time as he had lost previously. The couple of paragraphs that describe Job's restoration make it sound like a quick healing. However, this is due mainly to the fact that so little of the narrative is dedicated to how he was restored. But if you consider the facts, that a child takes about ten

months from conception to birth to be born, then you must realize that it took Job nearly ten years to receive back what he had lost in one day. And that's only if the mother was pregnant with each child back to back, with only two months of healing in between pregnancies. So in reality, Job's restoration may have taken much longer than ten years to realize.

God works on a slower timetable, but when His blessings arrive, they are powerful and beautiful. If you're patient and rest in His Spirit while you wait, you'll find His comfort. God made you to love you, so let Him. Release your pains and fear to Him. Let Him have your anxieties.

Making the Best of Your Circumstances

John was tilling soil on his father’s tractor when the accident happened.

Since they lived on a 200-acre farm, his dad had decided to teach him the value of hard work at an early age. In fact, he had learned how to drive the tractor when he was nine years old. But now that he was twelve, he was allowed to take the rifle with him to manage pests. This generally was a good idea, except for the fact that John tended not to keep his eyes on where he was going.

Their farm had a chronic pest problem. From gophers to deer, there was always something trying to eat their crops. When the ground was warm enough to till, it was usually an opportune time to find where the gophers were hiding. Otherwise, they would disappear in the rows of corn.

It was a cool, dark morning when John jumped on his dad’s tractor. The sun was barely peeking over the horizon when he grabbed his rifle. He took his seat and started the machine up with a rumble.

The early morning was the best time to check for fresh gopher activity, so he didn’t mind getting up. It offered him a chance to have a little fun and get in some target practice.

John took to his rows right away, following along the path had he left off with the previous day. The area he was tilling was a small back section of the property that jutted out from the main farmland. A short wood-and-barbwire fence lay alongside the field, about three feet from the edge, so he had to be careful not to veer off course.

He looked up at the sun-dazzled dirt and saw something skitter in the distance. John checked through the scope of the gun while the tractor trundled along, and sure enough, it was a gopher. He steadied his aim as best he could and bore down on the critter in the distance.

All it took was one shot—to send that gopher running to its home, that is.

“Drat!” John sighed. “Missed again.” He’d been trying to kill that rodent for the past two days, since he had first spotted it. But that old gopher seemed to evade every bullet he sent its way.

He kept his eyes on its home in the distance. Yesterday, after he startled it, it had popped its head out again after a few minutes. So this time, John was keeping his eyes fixed on that spot, and he left the safety on his gun off so that he could take

a shot quickly if he got another chance.

When John made it to the end of his row, he needed to set the gun down on his lap to turn and steady the tractor again. After turning, he was running along the fence, so he needed to pay close attention to the edge. But he was afraid that gopher might pop its head out and he'd miss it. So he steadied the tractor, and when he felt it was following the course well enough on its own, he looked behind him. After a few minutes, he let his guard down because the machine was running smoothly. With his hands to the wheel, he turned his head back again and kept watching.

But after a couple of minutes of not paying attention, the tractor veered off course. It plowed straight into the fence. Loud crunching and whirring sounds were heard from under the machine as it demolished the wood-and-wire structure.

The tractor jerked to a stop, and the gun fell from John's lap and off of the tractor. When the butt of the gun hit the ground, the weapon fired off a round into his arm.

The force of the bullet threw him from the tractor, knocking the wind out of him temporarily. He checked the wound and found that the bullet had hit the main artery that ran through his arm, and he was losing blood fast.

"Oh, God. Oh, God! Please save me, God!" he cried out.

His father was back at the barn, which sat several hundred yards away, when it happened. He had no idea about his son's situation because the sound of gun-shots was normal to him. John was stuck at the farthest end of the property without anyone to help him, and he was about to die.

He took his belt off and made a tourniquet, using a small, thin fragment of the fence to turn it. He wanted to climb back up the tractor to get to his dad, but he was already going into shock and was too weak from the fall to stand. So he lay there in a pool of his own blood, begging God to save him.

Old Mr. Hansen from the neighboring field was supposed to till a distant section of his property that day, but his tractor broke down unexpectedly, and he couldn't fix it. So he decided to play around on his ATV while he waited for his mechanic to show up.

He had heard John firing his gun earlier, so he thought he'd head to the edge of the property to check it out. That's when he found the boy, wallowing in blood.

John’s pulse was weak, and the boy gave no response. The old man acted fast and put him on the rack of his ATV. Then he brought the boy back to his own house, which was quicker than taking him to the boy’s home. He took him to the hospital without a moment to spare, then called John’s parents.

By a miracle, God saved John’s life. He should have been dead, and would have been if Old Farmer Hansen’s tractor hadn’t broken down that day. But God, knowing in advance what would happen, prepared help before John even needed it.

John was in the hospital room, lying awake, when his mother came in. She fell on him, full of tears, while she quietly thanked God that her boy was still alive. Then John gave her a hug with his good arm.

“I’m sorry, mom…” He tried to console her, but it wasn’t enough. The thought of her precious baby losing his arm tore her apart. John may have survived the ordeal, but the injured arm had been too torn up to repair, so the doctors had to amputate it. Now he had to go through life with only one arm because of a single mistake he had made.

For years he beat himself up over it. He couldn’t swim at the quarry with his friends any more. He loved playing sports, but never again would he run with a football, pass a basketball, or hit a baseball. He cried when he had to learn to drive. His family’s vehicle had a clutch, and you need two arms for that—one to shift gears and another to hold the wheel steady.

His decision on that one day changed his life. It took a piece of his heart when it happened, and it ruined him for years. Then, as a young man, he decided that his accident shouldn’t define who he was in Jesus Christ.

It had been nearly 35 years since the accident when I met John. I was attending the Saturday morning men’s study at church when he came walking in. It was my first day there, and being new to the church, I was excited to get to know the group members.

John took his coat off, then proceeded to help everyone else out of their coats. He gathered the jackets one by one as he hung them up in the nearby closet. While everyone was seated and the pastor was gathering his notes, John fired up the coffee maker. After a few minutes, he came walking out with the pot in hand, and everyone had their mugs ready. Each man had brought his own empty travel mug, knowing the morning ritual.

This routine was John’s idea, originally. Everyone used to bring their own

coffee, but when several of the men forgot their morning brew, they could hardly learn anything from the study, being tired. So John decided to make it a custom to brew coffee for them so that everyone could be encouraged together by the Bible study.

Every day, John served the men in any way he could find. He prayed for open eyes, and the Lord constantly showed him each person's need. Then he happily stepped in to fill the need, no matter how great or how small. In the beginning, the men refused to be served, but he insisted, and his kindness was an inspiration to everyone.

I tried to resist him, and I mentioned that I should be serving him. But he smiled as he poured my coffee, and he informed me of his heart.

"When I was young, I was grieved about my loss. But then it occurred to me that I need to be the example of Jesus, no matter what life throws at me. So I prayed, 'Lord, I wish I had two hands to serve you. But that was robbed from me. So I will honor you with my one good arm.' And from that day forward, I took up a servant's heart."

He encouraged me in this. Here was a one-armed man, whom we should be serving, but instead he humbled himself to be the servant. If this man would serve God diligently with all his heart, having only one arm, then how much more should we serve God with our two hands? All it takes it the right heart.

Don't let your circumstances define who you are in Jesus, but let Jesus define you. Don't allow your circumstances define your relationship with the Lord, either. Rather, let God refine your faith and bless you in His Spirit as you seek comfort from Him.

No matter what life throws at you, serve the Lord. While you're waiting for Him to save you, take the time to worship Him. Don't wait for life to be right to honor Him.

Glorify Him with what you have. If you have one arm, honor Him with it. If you've lost everything you own and only have two empty hands, then raise them up in worship. He deserves as much, and doing so will refresh your heart.

God Holds You Through It All

The Lord created you to love you. You are a precious, well-thought-out creation of God. He didn't make you to watch you suffer while doing nothing for you. His heart is tenderly connected to yours even as a mother's heart is to her nursing infant. When we say, "The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me" (Isaiah 49:14), the Lord replies,

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands…" Isaiah 49:15–16

No matter what, God is always there for you. Jesus didn't go through His horrifying death just to abandon you in the midst of your needs. He remembers and cherishes your needs. He will save you from every trial and lift you out of every pit. God will take care of all of your daily needs as you 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 such times, 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 always there, holding us through it all.

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

Would a mother forsake her own nursing baby? Neither will God forsake you. Though salvation from your circumstances may tarry, be patient because in God's perfect timing, He will save you. Jesus has always desired to save you from all trials and suffering, and He gave His life to accomplish that. He loves you!

And He will continue to prove Himself faithful. All you need to do is wait patiently in faith while He holds you through it all. Even though it may take a long time, as it did for Job, God will give you a blessing, which will be greater than anything you had before your trial. If this is not true of what you have currently been given, then God hasn't finished blessing you. As it is written,

"'For I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you and

confirm My covenant with you. You shall eat the old harvest, and clear out the old because of the new." Leviticus 26:9–10

Sometimes we suffer a trial because God is just clearing out the old blessing to fill us with a new one. In the case of this scripture, God is speaking a spiritual parable about clearing out the old law to make way for the newness of the Spirit. However, this statement is also literal. God clears out the old blessing to make way for newer and better ones.

So be patient when you're suffering. Know that God does not desire to see you hurt. Rather, He is using your circumstances to teach you self-discipline in a relationship with Him, that you may draw closer to Him all day, every day. And He is removing old blessing to bring in new.

Therefore, if you are currently enjoying a blessing, know that you may have to lose something in order to gain more blessings. If you want more food in your fridge, you'll have to clear out the old to make way for the new. If you want the blessing of eternal life, you'll have to lose your life.

Now, not every trial is like this. When you lose a loved one, to think that God is merely cleaning out the old would be abominable. While He may use the opportunity to purge your heart of many impurities, such a trial is nonetheless different.

Yet God will still use every evil circumstance to create good for you. Eric struggled with accepting this when his daughter died. He thought the scripture was saying, "Your bad circumstances are simply good in disguise." So he was angry, thinking that there was nothing good about the way his daughter died. And he was right in that there was nothing good about it, but wrong about his interpretation of the scripture.

It isn't that anything good comes from the death of someone you love. Rather, it's that God is so powerful and so loving that He is able to make your life good again. God is able to make good things happen in the midst of your pain as you learn to rest your heart in Him. Through your suffering, He will teach you how to rely on Him, and this will create a sense of nearness to Him that you never had before.

No matter what happens, God will hold you through it all. But He can't do this if you're not willing to be held by Him. Therefore, learn to sit in His presence daily. Find comfort as often as possible in His presence. Then, when you are done with your devotion, don't exit His presence to continue your day. Rather,

take Him with you by constantly meditating on Him. He comes with you when you leave the secret place. He never leaves you nor forsakes you, especially not now that you're hurting. He could never leave you, for His love compels Him to stay. But much more than that, His love also compels Him to comfort you.

However, if you don't pay attention to His presence and His voice, you'll never hear those soothing whispers of love that elevate your heart. So focus on Him and give Him your attention all day, constantly. Learn to abide in Him even as He constantly abides in you. His mind never departs from you to think of idle things. Likewise, do not allow your mind to be carried off in idleness, but learn to love God with all of your mind, as you are commanded. Rest in Him by speaking to Him constantly, all day, through prayer. As it is written,

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving…" Colossians 4:2

By seeking Him, you will find His comfort. If you want your Daddy to hold you, then climb in His lap so He can. But if you run away and hide in your sorrow, how can you be comforted? So take time to spend with Him. Be alone with Him and rest in His arms. Let His love cover you, and allow His Spirit to free 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 do this, and receiving His comfort is a choice of your heart. He is a relational God who calls you to seek Him. He has already stretched His hand out to you; now you need to stretch yours back to Him.

No matter how much it feels as if He isn't there, He has never left you. He has been waiting right by your side. No matter how much it feels as if He doesn't hear your prayers, He has heard them perfectly and has counted every tear you've shed during them.

So Beloved, don't weep alone. Let God hold you. He is standing next to you, so throw yourself into 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

Therefore, 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. If we don't seek God, then how are we loving Him more than we love ourselves? If we would rather focus on our situation and push Him out, then we're being selfish. He made you in order to love you and save you. On the day Adam and Eve sinned, and thereby separated all humanity from God, a piece of His heart died.

In the end, He decided that it would be better to be hated, spat on, tortured, scourged almost to death, otherwise treated brutally, and then murdered on a cross than to spend another moment without you. If He has loved you so much, that He would die to be nearer to you, then how do you think He feels when you push Him away?

God cares about everything you go through. He loves you with all of His heart! Before time began, He knew what would happen to you. He knew every circumstance that will come upon 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 before creation, for these things to happen. He has known what would happen and has patiently waited to hold you through it all.

It has been in His heart all this time to comfort you. He has been waiting for millennia 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 on which we stand. Remember this when darkness covers you and makes your vision fade, for His love is a fire that lights your way. When you are broken, turn to God, and His love will become a river of joy flowing from your heart.

God will always cherish you, and nothing will ever change His heart toward you. Nothing will ever separate you from His love. God would pass through heaven and earth, forcing all obstacles out of His way, just for a moment with you. And He proved that the day He died on a cross for you.

God Allows All Things Because He Loves Us

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

God does all things out of love, and there is nothing He brings upon 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. Though sometimes people are wicked, God will save you if you continue earnestly in His Spirit.

The Lord, 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, then nothing eternally good comes from painful circumstances; 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 remember during a painful experience. What good could come from cancer? What good could possibly come from the loss of a loved one? What good can come from the loss of a young child? The loss itself isn't good, but what God chooses to do with the circumstances is good.

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 He will raise you as well. He gained you and received back His firstborn, whom He had lost. Likewise, if you've lost a loved one, you will gain back what you lost even as God has regained all He lost.

We all have mountains and valleys in life; even God has experienced this. When He lost humanity to sin and death, His heart sank. His relationship with Israel, in particular, has been an emotional rollercoaster for God—just read the Old Testament.

His mountain is in heaven. Then Jesus stepped into the valley when He was born here. Yet Jesus received His throne when He ascended to heaven. It was His

before He came down to us, and He reclaimed what belonged to Him in the end.

From the time He was a baby, however, His life was terrible. Upon Jesus' birth, Herod sent Him running for His life. Joseph and Mary had to hide in Egypt to keep Him safe. His family didn't have the chance to go home and gather any belongings. They had to leave everything behind and flee immediately, lest He be killed.

Later in His ministry, He was often deprived of sleep. He dealt with faithless people and was persecuted constantly. He was derided, hated, mocked, and left hungry and homeless. There He was, the King of kings and Lord of lords—His Majesty, God of the universe—sleeping homeless and hungry in a field. What did He do when it rained? While it is rare, sometimes it snows in Israel in the winter. Jesus wasn't always invited into a home. Sometimes He had to withdraw from the city and hide in the wilderness because He drew such large crowds. So what would He do on the cold winter nights?

His life was the furthest thing from good. He was a king who didn't even possess an ounce of gold. Then, after all His suffering in poverty, He was tortured and murdered. Yet He had peace because He spent His time walking in the Holy Spirit and meditating on the will of the Father. And if we do likewise, we also will have the peace of God.

Moreover, after His trials, God was blessed in receiving His throne, spiritual body, and child back. While He had a spiritual body before He came down (His body was called "the Angel of the Lord" at various points in the Old Testament), and while He had His throne, what He truly gained from all His suffering was you.

So God laid down His previous blessing of being the God of heaven to take up the greater blessing of having you, while still being God. We likewise will gain a greater blessing at the end of our trials, than we had beforehand. While this may not always seem to be the case immediately, if you wait patiently, sometimes for years afterward, you'll see the end God had in mind.

Job was rich and lost everything. After his experience, however, he gained double his previous blessing. He laid down an old blessing to pick up a new and better one.

God has an end in mind when He allows us to suffer—an end that includes perfect peace with joy. He wouldn't let us suffer unless He knew that the end result would be better than the means to get there.

God gives us trials in order to teach us to live according to His word. But trials can lead 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 can 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 never spoke, 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. Hence, God allows us to suffer trials so that we can learn to rely on His word. As it is written,

"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 8:3

God leads us through the words of His mouth, which include more than only the Bible. While the Bible is extremely important for the believer's walk, we also must listen to the Holy Spirit as He interprets the Bible to us. He shows us on a daily basis how to practice the written word. So when you submit to the oral word of God, which is the voice of the Holy Spirit, you are also submitting to the written word. Why? Because He will not tell you to do things that will contradict the Bible.

We are led to eternal life by the Spirit, and without Him we are not saved. Just having the Holy Spirit isn't enough, however; we ***must*** obey the Spirit as well. As it is written,

"Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him. But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries." Exodus 23:20–22

In this scripture, the Angel who went before Israel was God. For this reason, Joshua later bowed to worship Him on the plain by Jericho.

So God allows our trials in order to teach us obedience to His voice and test our

obedience. The Father did this with Jesus, too. As we read,

“So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’ As He also says in another place: ‘You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek’; who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” Hebrews 5:5–8

Even as the Father allowed Jesus to suffer, that He might learn obedience, so He permits us to suffer, that we likewise can obey Him. He gives us our trials for the sake of eternal life, so that He may bring about a greater good for us from the circumstance.

God does all things out of love. Within the framework of love, He built you; with love in mind, He allows your heart to be sweetly and gently broken.

When a bone is broken, it heals stronger than it was before. 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. Remember this truth and walk in it. Learn to rejoice in the midst of your trials. Suffering has its place, but in every place we should put on the joy of the Lord. So turn your hurting into rejoicing! Overcome pain with praise. Worship God, and His Spirit will heal your heart. Remember that He loves you and learn to respond rightly to His love.

Remaining Faithful and Being Strengthened by Him

God has always loved you. He has always remained faithful to you. In every trial you have ever experienced, 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 practice your belief? Will you be like Job, who fell on his knees and worshipped God, accepting the bad with the good?

During hardship, Satan tempts us to be angry and impatient with God. Rather than learning the lesson at hand, we are tempted to forsake Him or to bring harm on ourselves or others. If we're too wrapped up in our pain, not releasing it to God and focusing on the lesson at hand, then we will never learn what God is teaching us. Pay attention so that you don't have to relearn old lessons. If you don't learn, sometimes God will allow another trial later to teach you the lesson you missed. I've personally found that, sometimes, the faster I learn the lesson, the sooner my trial is over.

Obviously, this isn't the case for every trial, and not every trial is for the purpose of learning. Some trials come from other's sins for example. But there is always something God can teach you through your suffering.

If brethren have sinned against us, Satan will tempt us to be divided from our brethren so that, when we're secluded in our wrath and brokenness, he may tempt us into our own sins. But Beloved, do not take your frustrations out on God or your brethren but, rather, remain unified in His Spirit and glorify God in your conduct. Rebuke those who have sinned and embrace those who repent. If they refuse, don't disassociate yourself from all fellowship because of that one person.

It can be difficult to find a place of peace in the middle of a storm. It can be hard to maintain 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, a door opens 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.

But 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 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 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.

After we have suffered a while, so 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.

Pray that God will make sense of your trials. If He wants you to learn a lesson through them, it would be wise to ask Him to convey that message to you. It would be good to pray for understanding, that you can grow and remain pleasing to Him.

One way in which we should always please Him is by having blind faith. If the darkness has surrounded you and you don't know the way out, take the time to thank God. Thank Him for every opportunity to have blind faith. Before you see the way out, thank Him through faith that He will save you and restore in His own time—remembering, of course, that restoration can take years.

Let God refine you through trials, and be grateful for the work He is doing. Learn to rejoice and thank Him in every situation of life. As it is written,

"…pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." 1 Thessalonians 5:17–18

I'm not saying to pray, "Thank you, God that I lost my job, and my home as a result. And thank you that I had that flat tire after hitting the curb so that now I have no transportation to find a job. Oh, and before I forget, thank you for the bed bugs with which I have been so blessed in the homeless shelter." (This prayer describes an actual trial suffered by someone I knew.)

The point of the scripture is that there is always a reason to rejoice and something you can find for which to be grateful, no matter the circumstances of life. As an old saying goes, "I was so poor that I cried because I had no shoes.

Then I met a man who had no feet."

Let this mind be in you as it was in Christ Jesus—that in His suffering, during the life of His ministry, He worshipped the Father. When He slept in the wilderness, He found comfort by withdrawing to pray and be intimate with the Father. Though He was hungry, poor, and often persecuted, He rejoiced always. This characteristic we see in Paul also. As it is written regarding the suffering of Paul,

"To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now." 1 Corinthians 4:11–13

And also,

"Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches." 2 Corinthians 11:22–28

But in all of Paul's suffering, he rejoiced and worshipped God. Hence, we also read,

"Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height —to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:13–19

And we read further,

“Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.” Philippians 2:17–18

This is a hard thing to learn and even more difficult to practice. But God calls us to have such a heart, that we should rejoice in Jesus always.

Sometimes God will use our trials to encourage countless others in the faith. Paul likens it to being crucified for the brethren. So Beloved, carry your cross, and God will raise you up.

The Lord uses our trials not only to encourage others around us but also to sharpen us in the faith. That He uses it to refine our faith is evident, for it is written,

“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 that we are called to rejoice in trials is also evident. For it is also written,

“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, it isn’t the trial with which we’re being patient. Rather, we must be patient with God while we wait for Him to save us. And we must learn such patience toward Him. 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 will give you what you need, even when you don’t think or feel you need it. Though not always, we sometimes need a trial to grow. Sometimes, too, we need a trial in order for someone 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.

However, it pains 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 to provide you whatever is necessary for eternal life.

He will give you what you need to grow in Him, in order 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 teach you so that you can move on from this trial and into the place of peace.

But in the meantime, as 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 your trial, but pray for strength while you're in the midst of it.

Yet don't only pray for strength to make it through the trial; pray also for strength to rejoice in the meantime. Pray for strength to worship Him and to glorify His name. He is deserving of this, as He has gone before you to suffer all things for your sake.

Therefore, Beloved, 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. Though this is easier said than done, His Spirit will lift up our hearts as we grow in Him, 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 endure the cross, 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 but that He desired the gift of God that would come afterward. We likewise receive a reward when we suffer. Through suffering, we find comfort in the middle of trial and a better relationship with the Lord in the end.

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 for the sake of growth. In this we learn to be self-disciplined, by submitting to the discipline of the Father. Likewise, Jesus had not committed any sin when He endured the cross.

However, the scripture to which we referred discusses chastening. Why would Jesus be chastened over sin if He had not committed any? Because for the sake of all, He embraced the discipline of the cross. Similarly, for the sake of love, God calls you to carry your cross.

For our sin we deserve wrath, but instead we have mercy. That’s actually unfair! We deserve condemnation but receive 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 if 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.

Yet remember that God cannot be where sin is. The two collide, resulting in the death of the sin. Remember also that sin exists in this world. 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 when He departed, where did the healing go? 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.

In that day, those who have loved Him will be healed. He will restore the broken, who have covered themselves with the blood of Christ, and 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 will never be revoked.

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. If you sit in His love, you will be strengthened by His Spirit.

Take the time to come out from 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 strength to rejoice in Him and in His faithfulness.

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Adam is a preacher, teacher and #1 internationally bestselling author of over 100 books on the Christian faith. He is a devoted husband and father of three boys. Through his travels, he’s seen the need for a new awakening and a new revival: a revival of the heart. Come join Adam on this journey of redemption and experience God like never before!

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