

# *Why Difficulties Come in a Christian's Life.*

## God permits in His wisdom what He could easily have prevented in His power.

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***“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.”*** Romans 8:28-29a.

### **Viewing Life's Challenges through God's Eyes:**

No one stays the same except the Lord. He is unchanging, constant, and consistent. But He pretty much changes everything He comes into contact with, including you and me. So, from the outset of this discussion, we will come to embrace “change” as the primary objective of what challenges He allows to touch and shape us. Change is hard, but necessary; the outcome is worth it!

“But changed how?” you might well ask. “Change is frightening and uncomfortable to me.” The answer is in the text above. God wants to conform you to the image of Christ. He is leading you to resemble His Son in character.

Let's use a biblical analogy from Jeremiah 18. God is like a Heavenly Potter; we are the clay in His hands. Clay is the artistic medium the Heavenly Artist has chosen to shape into a thing of beauty and usefulness. The clay has only one job – submit to the hands of the Potter. And as you turn and turn on the wheel of difficult circumstances and threatening challenges, you are being shaped after a pattern. The Potter's hands are on you, but His eyes are on the “Model” – His Son, Jesus Christ. Please know that the wheel is a necessary tool, but only temporary. The Potter controls the wheel. There will doubtless also be the heat of the kiln, the stroke of the brush, the setting aside for curing, etc. We are done when the Artist says we are done. So we wait in faith and hope. You are never closer, or more safe, than when you are in the careful, loving hands of the Potter. When you are done, you will reflect glory to this awesome Artist. He is proud of you – of what you are becoming! You will know His loving design as you submit.

The art of surviving the challenges is two-fold – Drawing near and listening. We must draw nearer to the Lord to the point that He is seen spiritually as BIG! Bigger than the difficulty we face. When we draw near to Him, He promises to draw near to us. Things take on a whole new perspective as we draw near. In that place of worshipful intimacy with the most High, He merely whispers and our spiritual ears can hear what the Spirit is saying. His perspective changes everything! Paul lays out the privilege we have to press into heaven itself in Colossians 3:1-4.

There is no maturity without stillness. Stillness is the ability to bring yourself into His rest and peace. It is the ability to still the noise, the clamoring preoccupation, on the inside of your head so that you can hear the voice of the Lord. It is a discipline. We must practice it, until peace becomes an instinctive, intuitive response to all that God is. Only then will we know confidently that God is bigger than our challenge. Let Him work His greater purpose in you.

### **There Are Answers to Our “Why” Questions.**

Understanding that God is dedicated to our “good,” what is the purposeful outcome God is seeking for us as he places each difficult challenge in our lives? Again, the answer come from God's perspective, not our own. Our part is to turn, to rest, and to yield our hearts to the Lord. We choose to submit to the purposes of God. Exercising our will is the key that unlocks our walk in the Spirit. As we learn to listen for His perspective, we can find peace, *“for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”* Philippians 2:13

So we come to believe that God has a purpose in what He allows, that this purpose flows out of His wisdom and love for us, and that the difficulty gives us opportunity to change, to become more like Christ. Our prayer can be:

Father, I know you are up to something – something “good.” I don't quite understand it yet. But I do trust You. So help me! Give me wisdom. Help me to see what You are doing. Help me to see it through Your eyes, so that I am actually cooperating with You in Your objective in the situation. Help me become conformed to the image of Jesus as I respond to the difficulty in a godly way. Lord God, I believe that You are greater, larger, than any difficulty You allow to come my way. Amen!

## What Are God's Purposes in the Challenges He Allows Us to Face?

Again, God permits in His wisdom what He could easily have prevented in His power. Let's be more specific:

### 1. The purpose of PROBLEMS is to produce in you FAITH.

Faith sees God as bigger than the problem we face. Here are some things to consider: Every **problem** God allows in your life comes with a **provision** attached. The key to unlock the provision is the **promise** of God. So we look with faith at the promise and say, "Father, I trust the word You are saying to me." When we stand in a problem, holding on to a promise by faith, a provision will follow. Faith is trusting in God's promises.

### 2. The purpose of DEMONIC OPPOSITION is to teach you about your AUTHORITY.

Do you really understand who has the power in a power-encounter with the dark side? It is you. It has been granted you by our victorious, resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. God allows a measured amount of opposition so He can show you how authority works. See Luke 10:17-23. The key here is thanksgiving. We need to be taken to a deeper place of rejoicing – a place so deep the enemy cannot access who we are – a place of thanksgiving so profound that the enemy squeals and runs for cover. Power is released in our celebration of Jesus.

### 3. The purpose of HUMAN OPPOSITION is to teach you GRACE.

This is why God allows difficult people in your life. They are there to teach you about grace. Difficult people are God's short-cut to planting His character in you. Without them you wouldn't develop in the fruit of the Spirit. Graham Cooke observes, "The problem that God is addressing is the 'love-hate' relationship -- you hate to love them; they love to hate you!" Now here comes Christ, who loved his enemies, and forgave those who crucified Him. His Spirit in you says, "Follow me and I will give you the power to love the unlovely."

### 4. The purpose of TRIBULATION is to teach you PATIENCE.

James says it plainly: "*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*" (James 1:2-3). God's grace is sufficient to allow you to endure. Thy this: From now on, let there be no such thing as a good day, or a bad day; Just a day of grace. Some days the grace of God will allow you to enjoy what is happening, and some days the grace of God will allow you to endure what is happening. Every day is a day of grace. That's where you and I are to live.

### 5. The purpose of TENSION is to teach you REST and PEACE.

Tension doesn't necessarily mean there's something wrong; it can just mean there's something happening. There is no movement without tension. Consider that lifting a glass involves your fingers to be in tension. However, when the Holy Spirit comes to revive a church, the flesh rises up. The Spirit goes straight for the throat of all carnality. When churches go through transitions, tension is inevitable. When this is attended by the "religious" flesh, it can become ugly, an un-civil war. We need to be at peace to hear the wisdom of God. Hearing Him requires stillness. Peace is when our faith has found it's resting place in the God of peace.

### 6. The purpose of TEMPTATION is to produce in you RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The enemy puts something in our path because he knows there is something in us that leans toward it. But every time there is a negative from Satan, there is a positive from God as well. When temptation comes, not only is sin near, but righteousness is also near. See 1 Corinthians 10:13. We must choose our focus. Anything in us that is not leaning toward our Lord can become fair game for the enemy to touch. Power is present for us to choose rightly. Our choices for righteousness build and reinforce Christ-like character over time. Hebrews 2:18 says that Jesus was tempted without incurring guilt. He will run to your aid when you are tempted.

### 7. The purpose of CONFLICT IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS is to produce LOVE.

Life in the kingdom is build upon values and principles. Values are relational; principles are operational. So we need a set of values for how we will live our lives operationally. Graham Cook notes: "We must drag every conflict onto the ground of our values." Here are some biblical values: Love is non-negotiable. Love is unconditional. Love is committed. See 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 for a fuller list. But the greatest value is loving God above all else. Conflict is a short-cut for increasing and improving the quality and purity of our love.