

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



Wisdom in the Midst of Trials

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 1:1-8 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:29 | 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 | Ephesians 6:10-17
Hebrews 13:5

SUMMARY

Our natural reaction to trouble is to seek a way out, but sometimes God has something far more important in mind than our immediate relief.

Instead of focusing on escape, we need to figure out what we can learn from the difficult or painful experience. Trials require wisdom because each one brings with it a choice. We can either become bitter and hostile toward God or respond in a way that benefits us.

Peter's first letter was addressed to people who were undergoing persecution because of their love for Christ. He encouraged them by explaining what was of utmost importance—an imperishable inheritance in heaven (1 Pet. 1:3-8). In light of their present salvation and this future hope, they could actually rejoice even in the midst of their trials. The testing of their faith was more precious than gold because it would result in praise, glory, and honor at the coming of Jesus. When they saw the situation through the Lord's eyes and responded wisely, they benefited from their trials.

SERMON POINTS

If pain and difficulty come our way, we need to turn to God for wisdom.

We can find insights from God by asking the following questions:

- What is the right thing to do in light of my past difficult circumstances?
- What is the right thing to do in light of my present state?
- What is the right thing to do in light of my future

goals and dreams?

- What would God have me to do in this particular situation?

When the going gets tough, we may be tempted to walk away instead of seeking the Lord's guidance, but that will lead us straight out of His will. What we really need is the wisdom to learn from Him as we walk through the hardship and pain. When we get to the other side of the dark valley, we'll be able to thank God for loving us enough to use this experience to accomplish His good purpose.

We need wisdom to discern the source of our trials.

The origin of suffering is not always obvious. It could be sent by God for His purposes, but Satan also tries to thwart us with trouble and pain. Sometimes we're simply reaping the consequences of our own foolish choices, or suffering as a result of someone else's actions. At other times, the difficulty appears to happen accidentally, and no one is responsible.

No matter what the source, the Lord is always sensitive to our pain. Furthermore, we are surrounded by His awesome, divine protection. As God's children, nothing touches us unless it first passes through His sovereign and loving hands. Everything He allows in our lives has the potential of being beneficial to us. His goal is not to harm but to bless.

We need wisdom to discern the purpose of our trials.

The Lord uses suffering to accomplish His will in our lives. When we cooperate with His plans, not only are we benefited, but we're able to bless other people as well. Furthermore, when we understand what He's trying to accomplish, we're able to rejoice

even in our pain.

When we fail to understand God's purposes for our trials:

- We'll see them only as negative, senseless events having no connection to God.
- We won't understand the Lord's ways, and as a result, our pain will seem pointless.
- We'll miss the blessing God wanted to give us.
- We will feel defeated, hopeless, and helpless.
- We'll be disappointed because of our inability to handle difficult situations in our own strength.
- We will see ourselves as victims of our circumstances rather than recipients of the Lord's protective care.
- We'll feel controlled by other people instead of recognizing God's ultimate control.

Trials accomplish God's good purposes in the following ways:

- They prove our faith. When we persevere in trials, trusting in Him, our faith strengthens.
- They test our devotion. When hardship comes, our devotion becomes evident.
- They purify our lives. God often uses pain to uncover sins we haven't faced.
- They allow God to show Himself strong in our lives. When suffering is beyond our ability to endure, the Lord demonstrates His love for us.
- They develop Christlike character in our lives. God transforms us into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29).
- They equip us to help others through the same difficulties (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

We need wisdom to discern the proper response to our trials.

If we believe all that Scriptures say about the benefits available to us in our difficulties and pain, we will stop moaning and groaning, and instead, rejoice that God is up to something good in our lives.

We'll never be able to rejoice in the midst of pain and suffering:

- If our priorities aren't right, we won't seek wisdom.
- If we value comfort more than what God is doing in our character, trials will upset us.
- If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual, we can't count it all joy when we experience hardship.
- If we live only for the present and forget the future, our difficulties will make us bitter instead of better.

We can rejoice in trials when we are convinced of the following:

- God is in control of the time and intensity of our suffering in all matters.
- He has a specific purpose for allowing it.
- The Lord uses pain and hardship to equip us to encourage and bless others.
- A trial is an opportunity to demonstrate perseverance under pressure.
- God is developing Christlike character in us.
- Hardships will help us measure our own spiritual growth.
- God walks with us through every phase of our most difficult trials.

RESPONSE

- What questions do you typically ask the Lord when you are experiencing suffering or difficulty? Is your first reaction an attempt to get out of the pain and trouble or to learn what God wants to teach you through it?
- Have you ever searched the Scriptures to see what God says about trials? How would understanding His purposes change your response to difficulties?
- Have you ever rejoiced in what the Lord is doing in you through hard times? If so, what benefits did you experience?

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