

Facing The Giants: Suffering And Adversity

by Johnny Hunt

TITLE:	Facing The Giants: Suffering And Adversity
BIBLE BOOK:	1 Peter 3 : 14
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SUBJECT:	Adversity; Suffering
OBJECTIVE:	Dr. Johnny Hunt begins this message by focusing on two questions...First, "Why do bad things happen to God's people?" Second, "How do most people respond to suffering and adversity." These are two important questions that many are asking in the wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy this week. Dr. Hunt directs us to what God's Word says about difficult times such as these and how we can find hope in the midst of suffering.

Introduction
I. David: Adversity As Punishment
II. Joseph: Adversity For Preparation
III. Job: Adversity With Perseverance

Introduction

Text: 1 Peter 3:14a; 1 Peter 4:12-16, 19

Let me begin by simply stating that I am not a graduate from the "School of Adversity." The truth is, I have taken very few courses. With that being said, today we are students in the same class and the teacher will be our Lord Jesus and His Word.

Statements I Have Embraced

- The Lord has been better to me than I deserve!
- The Lord has been better to me than I could have ever dreamed!
- I do not feel or think that I deserve such favor/blessing!
- I trust that as I grow older I will learn to never take His favor for granted!
- May God spare (spare) me from a "spirit of entitlement"!
- May I always have a grateful heart!

Question: Why Do Bad Things Happen to God's People?

1. Many Christians today believe that if they do all the right things, God owes them a life of blessing, good health, happiness, and prosperity.

Obedience can't be viewed as an insurance policy against adversity. Every blessing we receive is a gift from God.

2. "God, if You are loving, just, and all-powerful, why do You allow good people to suffer?"

Billy Graham - "Answers To Life's Problems"

"We do not know all the reasons why God permits evil. We need to remember, however, that He is not the cause of evil in this world and we should therefore not blame Him for it. Remember that God

did not create evil, as some believe. God created the world perfect. Man chose to defy God and go his own way, and it is man's fault that evil entered the world. Even so, God has provided the ultimate triumph of good over evil in Jesus Christ, Who, on the cross, defeated Satan and those who follow him. Christ is coming back and when He does, all evil will be ended forever and righteousness and justice will prevail."

Have you ever thought about what would happen if God suddenly eliminated all the evil in this world? Not one person would be left, because we are all guilty of sin.

Psalms 130:3, "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?"

Lamentations 3:22, "Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not."

At the end of the book of Job, he attempts to answer the question of why good people suffer.

O.S. Hillman, "The Upside Of Adversity"

"Yes, there are people who love God and put their trust in Him, and they receive His forgiveness as a gift of grace, but there are no good people. All have sinned, and no one is entitled to anything good from God. The suffering we endure is the result of living in a fallen world. The blessings we receive are the undeserved gifts of God's grace."

How Do Most People Respond To Suffering/Adversity?

We Become Angry. (Bitter)

As a result of this response, we become resentful and blame God and others for our problems. We view ourselves as victims and demand that God and others answer our accusing questions.

Suck It Up.

Adopt a stoic attitude, repressing our emotions. We lie to ourselves and say we are persevering. In reality, we are merely isolating ourselves with a shell of false bravado.

We don't meditate on God's love, we don't pray, we don't believe God really has anything planned for us.

Ike Reighard taught on Isaiah 45:3

"I will give you the treasures of darkness
And hidden riches of secret places,
That you may know that I, the LORD,
Who call you by your name,
Am the God of Israel."

God's desire for us, in times of adversity, is that we come to know Him in a more intimate way.

When God sends a crisis into our life, he wants us to desire Him, not just an escape from the problem.

Acceptance With Joy.

When adversity comes, we rest in His love and trust that He knows best. We realize that nothing can happen to us without His permission. If there is pain in our lives, we know it's because God deems it necessary

for our growth, or wishes to use our pain to minister to others.

When we walk through trials with acceptance and joy (which is supernatural), it is something we can only receive as a gift from the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and we grow in Christian maturity.

A.W. Tozier once wrote, "It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He hurts him deeply."

C.S. Lewis, "The Problem Of Pain"

"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Let's Look At 3 Lives And Their Adversity

I. David: Adversity As Punishment

Sometimes the adversity that comes into our lives is the direct result of sin.

1 Peter 4:15, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters."

Hebrews 12:5-11 speaks of the discipline of God.

David's sin greatly affected his leadership in the home.

He and Bathsheba's son died

Absalom rebelled

Amnon raped Tamar

Absalom killed Amnon

Absalom abused David's wives

II. Joseph: Adversity For Preparation

From a human perspective, what happened to Joseph was "bad."

Genesis 50:20, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."

Romans 8:28, "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."

Human history sparkles with the testimonies of people who could have been victims but who decided to be victors.

Helen Keller, "Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it."

Suffering will either be your master or your servant, depending on how you handle the crisis of life. After all, a crisis doesn't make a person; it reveals what a person is made of. What life does to us depends on what life finds in us.

"Character is the raw material of life. Reputation is what you think I am, but character is what God and I know I am. There is a sense in which suffering helps to make a man or a woman; but there is also a sense in which suffering reveals what they are made of." W.W. Wiersbe

Adversity builds strength. Consider the butterfly. It begins life as a caterpillar, a worm-like larva that spins a cocoon for itself. For weeks, the larva remains hidden within the cocoon as it undergoes metamorphosis. When it is time for the butterfly to emerge, it must struggle and fight its way out of the cocoon. Watching this struggle, we might be tempted to help by tearing open the cocoon, but that's the worst thing we could do. A butterfly that is not allowed to struggle will emerge in a weakened state, unable to fly. Butterflies need adversity to become what God intended them to be.

"Wherever souls are being tried and ripened, in whatever commonplace and homely way, there God

is hewing out the pillars for His temple." Phillips Brooks

Joseph could have acted differently in his trial:

Could have run away.

Could have been paralyzed

Could have resisted

Could have resigned (given up on God)

Instead, acceptance with a view to grow

He lived by promises, not explanations. He became 2nd in command of all of Egypt.

III. Job: Adversity With Perpeixity

Thanks to Job's willingness to suffer and refute Satan's charges, we today can suffer by faith and know that God is working out His perfect purposes.

Job's Friends: If you obey God, he will bless you; if you disobey God, he will punish you.

God's Evaluation of Job:

Job 1:8, "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?'"

Job 2:10, "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"

God uses adversity in the life of Job to answer an important question:

Is God worthy to be loved and obeyed even if He does not bless us materially and protect us from pain? Can God win the heart of man totally apart from His gifts?

Job 13:15a, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him"

Job 19:25-27

"For I know that my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;
And after my skin is destroyed, this I know,
That in my flesh I shall see God,
Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!"

Job was looking for a relationship with God, while his friends were looking for reasons to explain his plight.

God can take our adversity; a heart-attack, cancer, and automobile accident, bankruptcy, the loss of a loved one, and transform that pain into blessing for the people around us.

Paul Williams/Jay Strack - "THREE SUCCESS SECRETS OF Shamgar"

"Our experiences may not all be triumphs and successes, but so what? Failure is usually a far better teacher than success, if men are willing to learn the lessons."

Adversity can bring us to the place where we stop expecting God to serve our needs and instead seek to serve His purposes.

To put it bluntly, we die to ourselves, to our desires, to our ambitions, and to our wants. We begin to

seek His face, not just His hand in our lives.

Job 42:5, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You."

A new perspective. Instead of needing an explanation from God, he got a revelation of God.

Alexander Pope wrote what he called the 9th Beatitude, "Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed."