

Confidence in God in the Midst of Trials, Part 1

I. ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD (ROM. 8:28)

- A. God promised to overrule all the difficulties in a believer's life by causing them to work for good. Taking hold of this promise by faith will bring confidence to our lives instead of living continually with anxiety. If we knew all that God knows, we would feel differently about our problems.

²⁸We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose... ²⁹to be conformed to the image of His Son. (Rom. 8:28-29)

Romans 8:28 is one of the most well-known promises in the Bible. It is a favorite for many believers. Those who are wise will build this truth into the foundation of their spiritual life. Let's read it. Paul wrote, "For we know that all things work together for good to those who love God and to those who are the called to according to His purpose." Then he goes on and describes the purpose of God that is to be conformed to the image of His Son. Now this is a very dramatic statement that everything works together for good. God has promised to use His sovereign power and His infinite wisdom to overrule everything in our life so that it turns out working out for our benefit. That is a most remarkable reality.

Now the only people on the earth who have this blessing available to them are born-again believers because we are in relationship to the God of creation. He is our Father, and He is zealous to use His sovereign power—His infinite power—and wisdom to reverse things in our life. He is committed to this as a Father. This is an expression of His heart as a Father. It is an amazing expression and manifestation of His redemption. He is the great Redeemer. He is the Father who looks at His children and the different mistakes that we have made, the wrong decisions we have made, even the times we failed in sin or there has been injustices against us by other people who mean evil against us or the devil attacks us and, whether it is our mistakes or sinful failures, the injustice of others, the attack of the devil, the Lord says, "I will take it all and I will overrule it. I will cause a great reversal to happen in your life. I will show you My goodness in it."

Now look at verse 28 again. We know that all things work together for good to those who love God. That is the qualifier: to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Now the commitment to love God means it is talking to believers, born-again believers, that though we stumble and fail, though we make wrong decisions, still we commit ourselves to His leadership. We repent of our sin, we acknowledge our failures, we acknowledge our errors, and we commit ourselves in love under His leadership. It is in that context that the great reversal takes place.

We set our heart to be in unity with His purpose. There are a number of dimensions of God's purpose, but the one mentioned here is that we would be like Jesus, that we would be conformed to the image of the Son of God. It is in this context of being like Jesus that we partner with Him in the most effective way. When our heart is in unity with His heart, we are most effective in partnering with Him in seeing the kingdom of God being released across the earth.

Now this promise is glorious, but it is not enough that God stated the promise in the Word of God. We have to take hold of it. We have to engage actively with this promise because this promise is available to every single born-again believer. Many believers continue to live a life filled with anxiety, filled with guilt, filled with uncertainty instead of living in the confidence and the certainty that this promise would give us. This promise is right there within reach of every single believer, but if we do not actively engage with it, we will not end up in the spirit of confidence. We will stay in a spirit of insecurity and uncertainty, and it is in that place that the enemy wants to keep us.

It is powerful when a believer is sincere in their love and obedience towards the Lord. A sincere believer who adds faith to their sincerity—let’s use the words “active confidence” as it is a confidence that is interacting with God. It is more than just confidence by itself, but is an interactive confidence where we are talking to God, we are dialoguing with Him, and we are in this interchange. It is this active confidence with God that is really what faith is—So you take a sincere believer and you add confidence to them, they will be a threat to the kingdom of darkness.

A sincere believer who does not walk in confidence or a spirit of faith still troubles the kingdom of darkness, but they are not a great threat because they are continually drawing back. They are preoccupied with their own failures, their own struggles, and they are not Jesus-focused, God-ward-focused according to what the Word of God says. They do love Him, but they are constantly managing all of their negative emotions. This is where confidence in believing the Word of God comes in, in such a practical way.

Now this passage about all things working together for good is one of the simplest of gospel truths. I mean this is the gospel message 101. And yet, though it is the simple gospel message and many believers look at it and say, “Yes, that is good,” when they are in the actual troubling situation they do not draw on it, they do not live by this truth. They do not take their stand on it. They do not speak this word over their heart, over their circumstances, and over the attack of the enemy against their life. It is just a promise that is out there. It is like a trophy case with a trophy on the shelf that we look at, but we do not use it as the sword of the Spirit in our active warfare against the enemy.

Now if we knew everything that God knew about our situation, we would feel very differently about it. We typically only know a little bit of the information—how difficult our circumstances are in that moment—and that is about as far as most of us naturally see. The Lord would say, “I’ve got the big picture. I have got a bigger storyline going on in your life. I am working from a bigger picture. Number one,” the Lord would say, “I know how I am going to answer you. And I know, number two, how this trouble you are working through is going to change you. I know how I am going to use you in a more effective way through it. I know how much closer you are going to be to Me through it.”

We do not know that. We are looking at the problem right in front of us and thinking, “Oh my! What a difficult situation!”

The Lord would say, “I know so much more than you know. Trust Me! I may not give you what you want, but I promise you that I will always give you what is ultimately for your good, always.” He will overrule even our own failures, our own wrong decisions and the attack of the enemy and cause it to work together for our good. I mean this is a most remarkable reality.

- B. ***For good:*** God’s first priority is our *spiritual growth* (that we be conformed to Jesus), but the good He promised also includes *blessed circumstances* and being a *vessel of blessing* to others. Jesus blessed people’s circumstances when He healed bodies, multiplied food, calmed storms, etc.

The Lord says that it is for our good. He will do this for our good. Now what does that mean, for our good? His first priority is our spiritual growth, our spiritual maturity, that we would be conformed to the image of Jesus. That is the part of our life we take with us to the age to come, our conformity to the image of Jesus. Whatever degree to which we grow in love or humility and wisdom, we actually take that with us to the age to come.

We do not take our cars or our house. We do not take our database or our ministry reach. We do not take our bank accounts, but we do take our spiritual maturity with us. The Lord would say, “You really want Me working on this for you because your gold forever will be the way that you grew in love and humility. So you really want Me to do this.” That is the Lord’s first priority when He says, “I am working together for your good.”

However, do not limit God's commitment to our good only to our spiritual growth and maturity. He actually wants to bless our circumstances as well. There are many verses from Genesis to Revelation where God promises or makes known His zeal to bless our circumstances. The reason I am saying this is because some folks are so focused on their development of their spiritual life and character—which is good, we want to have that number one, but they are so focused on that—that they minimize God's zeal to bless our circumstances and the biblical basis of this blessing. They see well-blessed circumstances as generally for the carnal believers, and they are just going for a deeper heart of love and humility. Though we want that to be number one, we want **everything** that God wants to release through us and to us as our heavenly Father. He really does want to bless our circumstances.

One of the ways He wants to bless our circumstances is by preparing us to be more effective in our ministry calling and our ministry assignment. When I mention our ministry calling, I do not mean just our ministry in the church organization. I mean our ministry calling. Our ministry assignment is in the marketplace, it is in our home, it is in our neighborhood, and it is in our family structures. Obviously not all of our ministry is in the confines of a church organization chart. So when I think of our ministry assignment, I am talking about the five-year-old believer to the ninety and hundred-year-old believers. In every stage of life we have a ministry assignment, whatever assignment that is, whatever station of life that is.

The Lord is working to prepare us to be more effective in that assignment because we will affect people in a greater way for the kingdom of God and also because we will bring the fruits of that assignment with us to the age to come in the context of eternal rewards, etc.

Now one of the great examples of this in the Bible is King David, in terms of God using negative circumstances to prepare him to be effective in his ministry assignment. Most of you know that King David was king over Israel. He became king over Judah when he was thirty years old and then over all of Israel a little bit later. In his twenties he had the most difficult time that you could imagine. Through his twenties, for about seven or eight years, King Saul, the king of Israel, was jealous of him. So King Saul determined to kill him. King Saul dispatched 3,000 full-time soldiers with the sole task of killing David. So David ran around the nation going from cave to cave hiding from King Saul.

Now in the big picture of David's life God had anointed him to be king of Israel one day. He was not king yet, but God had ordained that he would be the great warrior king of Israel. In order to be a great warrior king, David had to know the geography of the land, because a warrior king has to know the geography or it is not going to work. So the Lord could have said something like, "Well, David,"—I am just making up the conversation—"I can put you in geography class to teach you the land, because to be a warrior king you have to know the land. You have to know where all the hiding places are, where the military points of advantage are, and where the natural resources are. You have to know that if you are going to be an effective king. So I could put you in geography class and teach you the land or I could just put you in the land." Well, the Lord chose just to put David in the land. For seven or eight years David is running around, hiding from cave to cave, with 3,000 full-time soldiers coming after him. It is their full-time occupation to find him. He is running, escaping, and finding hiding places. He is learning the land in an intimate way.

Years later, after he became king, I can imagine him in military strategy times where he is with his top generals, and he says, "You know, we can put a 1,000 men here, and we can hide 100 men in this cave, and there is water in that cave, but there is not in this one. At this time of the day, the sun rises and there is a certain reflection of the sun on this so the enemy cannot see you. Over there is the shade, and I know how the wind blows at certain times of the day often up on that mountain top."

They say, "David, how do you know all of this?"

He replies, "I hid in those caves. I drank in those water places. I used that to escape those 3,000 men, to allude 3,000 men who were trying to kill me."

So it ended up that David's difficult time in his twenties worked together for his good because he learned the land plus many other dynamics in his walk with God. David became the great warrior king, and his learning of the land was because God put him in the land.

Well, I have important news for you! When God wants to teach you about the land, He is going to put you in the land instead of merely giving you a geography class. We would like just to go to a class on victory so that we can teach people about victory. You know, we go to the class, and we learn the lessons and the precepts so we can teach our children, we can teach our friends, and we can encourage people on victory. Mostly you are not going to learn about victory in a classroom; you are going to learn about victory the most effective way, by being in the land, facing your failures, your fears, wrong choices, right choices, God's intervention, God hiding Himself, God revealing Himself, the enemy getting the upper hand for a minute then the sudden reversal, the Lord breaking in, and all the range of emotions that go in that. That is how God trains us to be most effective in the days to come in our future so that we can walk forth in our assignment.

Well, the Lord not only blesses our circumstances by making us more effective in our ministry assignment and preparing us in that way, He also blesses our circumstances by these sudden reversals. Again, this is God the great Redeemer. He can cause great reversals of disaster to make it work together for our good. Nobody can do this but God our Father. He is the only One who can make this happen. When it happens, and we see His blessing, we see that it is beyond anything we could have earned or deserved. Yes, we labor and we work in the midst of our life context, but the blessing and the impact is always greater than the labor we put in. So if we really understand it, there is no way we can imagine, even in our pride, or fantasize about the idea we deserved or earned the blessing God gave us. It is by the grace of God, and though the Lord uses our involvement and our labor in the midst of it in the areas He blesses us, the blessing and the impact is always far greater than we ever could have deserved or earned even by our active cooperation with Him.

Not only is this for our good—for our spiritual good or for our blessed circumstances—that we would be wowed by God and so grateful for His gracious intervention and the great reversals that happen in our life, the preparation for future ministry and for future assignments, God also uses this struggle we go through to make us a vessel of blessing to other people. Often through our struggle and through our own mess we get our message that we give to others.

In 2 Corinthians 1:4, Paul talked about how we comfort people with the comfort we discovered when we were in anguish and in pain. When we are in a difficult situation, and we get comforted by the Lord, and we get a breakthrough over time by the Lord, it is that experience and that journey with the highs and lows, the good responses and bad responses, that actually prepares us to touch other people as well.

Well, the Lord Jesus Himself was zealous for blessed circumstances. When you read the gospels, you see that He healed people not only to show He was God and He was the Anointed Messiah, He healed people because He had compassion. He cared about helping the people. He actually wanted to bless their circumstance. He multiplied the food to bless them, not just to prove that He had power. Of course He did prove He had power, but He actually had compassion on the fact that they were hungry. When you feed 5,000 people—that is quite an economic blessing that He used His power to do. He calmed the storms to protect them, and many of the miracles He did were displays of His power to show who He was and who He is, but they were also a manifestation of His zeal to bless the circumstance of His people.

- C. Joseph's family betrayed him by selling him into slavery that lasted over ten years (Gen. 37-50). God overruled their plans to do evil to Joseph by using it to raise him up to become a vessel of blessing to save many people. Joseph became the most powerful man in Egypt under Pharaoh.

²⁰But 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... (Gen. 50:20)

One of the classic examples of God overruling an evil, difficult situation and turning it to good is the life of Joseph in Genesis 50. You can read the story of Joseph in the last chapters of Genesis, and it is quite remarkable. In Genesis 50 we see Joseph's encounter with his ten brothers.

Most of you know the story, that when Joseph was about seventeen or eighteen years old, his ten older brothers were so jealous of him that they sold him into slavery to a foreign nation. Joseph, a young Jewish teenager, became a slave in Egypt. Later he ended up in an Egyptian prison. He did not know the language, I assume. He did not know the culture, and he probably was in a prison with no one else of his background and nationality. I mean what a horrible situation! And for about the next ten years he is in this context—a terrible situation.

Now earlier God had promised him that some great things would happen in his life. Like David who received promises in his teenage years, Joseph received promises in his teenage years, yet both of them spent the most of their twenties—the years of their twenties—in tremendously difficult circumstances that were completely the opposite of everything that God promised them in their life.

David's promise was to be king of Israel. When he was in his twenties, it did not look like there was going to be a chance he would be king. Joseph was promised great authority and great prominence, but in his twenties he is in prison as a slave. I mean it was horrible, and it went on about ten years. Then there is that sudden reversal for both Joseph and David when each of them is about thirty years old. The great reversal takes place as Joseph is promoted, as most of you know, to become the most powerful man in Egypt. There was a supernatural reversal in his life that came as a "suddenly" from the Lord. So many times when the Lord intervenes, it is a "suddenly" that we could not have imagined how it was going to happen. Even just days or weeks before it happens, you cannot imagine He is about to change everything dramatically in a positive way.

Well, Joseph becomes the most powerful man in all of Egypt under Pharaoh, and a great famine comes in the land. Joseph has all the authority over the food, and he has all the authority over the wealth. His ten brothers are in need of food and supplies. So they come to Egypt, and to their shock, little Joseph—little Joey—years later is now the prince of Egypt. That is, he is the leader over all the food and supplies. They are shocked! How did you get from that prison to that throne?

Now the ten brothers are very afraid. They are saying, "Joseph you know we did not really mean to sell you into slavery. We weren't really thinking about what we were doing." I do not know how they got out of that one.

Joseph said, "Stop, you do not have to worry." Look what he says in Genesis 50:20, "As for you, you meant it for evil against me"—there was no question; your motives were to destroy my life—"but God meant it for good." That is, God allowed you to do evil against me, but God always had a bigger picture in mind. There was a storyline, there was a bigger picture God was operating from, and therefore He allowed you to do evil to me. Joseph says this big picture was in order to bring it about as it is today. In other words he was saying, "I have the authority over all the food and all the wealth, and now I can be the source of salvation to save the whole Jewish nation at that time from starvation and to be a source of provision and God's blessing and salvation to them." That was the storyline, so Joseph could say, "I have no anger against you because, though you meant it for evil, God was working on a big picture all the time."

Now what the devil does, he means it for evil. The Lord will allow it and give the enemy some liberty to attack us, knowing that the attack will be measured and knowing that He has given us authority to withstand and resist the attack of the evil one. We take that place of authority, and though the devil means it for evil, though people mean it for evil, God is working a bigger picture in our life. I have good news: that God allows trouble and even the trouble we cause through our own sin, our own wrong decisions, but He turns it around to an amazing story of salvation that takes place in our life.

- D. The Lord promised to strengthen us in every circumstance to do God's will and to provide for all of our needs in His will. We may not get all that we want, but we will get all that we need.

¹³I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me...¹⁹And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:13, 19)

I want to add two more verses from Philippians 4 to Romans 8:28. I want to put them together, as a little cluster of three verses. I think of these verses and use them often in my spiritual life and my spiritual journey. Romans 8:28 when the enemy comes against me, and here is what the enemy is always trying to get us to do. The enemy is trying to get us to quit with despair. That is always on his mind. He wants us to be so filled with despair we just give up and give in and draw back. He wants us to quit our faith, but if not that, then at least quit pursuing God, draw back in our pain and our anguish overwhelmed by the difficulty, and just quit. I just know that is what the enemy wants in your life.

So if he cannot get you just to quit in despair, at least he wants you to draw back a little bit with fear in your heart and anxiety and complaining and self-pity and consumed with how bad we have it, so that we are not effective in the kingdom, so that we do not have the boldness to pursue the Lord in our relationship with Him. We get so caught in what is happening wrong that we lose sight of what is right and what is true in our walk with God, what He has given us, the authority we have, who we are in Christ, our destiny with Him, His former goodness, and His future goodness that is going to be manifest in our life. We lose sight of it because we get so caught up in what is wrong.

Then the enemy says, "Well, if I cannot get you to quit in despair or draw back in anxiety, fear, complaining, and self-pity, I will get you to put yourself on spiritual probation because you feel disqualified and condemned because of your failures."

There are a lot of believers who say, "I do not want to draw back. I love Jesus, but I am so disqualified because of my own wrong decisions and my own failures. I am just going to step out of this race for a while, put myself on spiritual probation, and just kind of sit out for a season until somehow I pay God back or somehow I make it right with God."

The devil is good with that because it gets you out of the race, it gets you out of the war, and it makes you far more vulnerable for him to destroy. Beloved, I have good news for you! In Romans 5:20, Paul said, "Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds." Whatever sin you committed, there is much more grace that will qualify you freely to walk in the blessing of God. No matter what the negative is or the setback is, Romans 5:20: there is a much more dimension to the grace of God. We will never be able to sin or make mistakes in our life greater than the scope of God's grace for our recovery and our free redemption! That is just plain gospel 101. That is what the message of the gospel is about.

Anyway, let's look at these two verses from Philippians 4, verses 13 and 19. I like to put them together with Romans 8:28. I just use these three verses regularly like the sword of the Spirit against the attack of the enemy. In Ephesians 6:17, Paul tells us that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit.

A sword is not just an object to appreciate from a distance, to observe. We have to use the sword and engage in a battle. We all have access to the Word of God—the sword of the Spirit—but many believers never use their sword. When the enemy comes with despair, they just quit or, with anxiety, fear, and self-pity, they draw back. With condemnation they cancel themselves out, and they do not use the Word of God to say no to the enemy. They do not speak the Word of God over their heart, they do not speak the Word of God over their circumstances, and they do not speak the Word of God over the attack of the enemy. They just let whatever happens happen, and it is negative, and it is unnecessary. That is the message of the Word of God.

Paul says here in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” This is a dramatic statement! He is saying that there is no circumstance that I can be in—that God will not allow me to be in a circumstance—where I cannot have peace by the Holy Spirit. There is no circumstance where He will not strengthen me to do the will of God in victory. He is saying that if that circumstance existed, then God would not allow me to be in it, that He has worked in such a way that He will strengthen me. Now when Paul was writing this, he was in prison. I mean he is in a prison cell writing this. In the prisons in the ancient world obviously there was no air conditioning, there was not any plumbing system; that was a totally unclean environment with a bunch of horrible situations. A prison. That is where he is. You can just picture it yourself, just the difficulty of that. He says, “I am strengthened by the Holy Spirit to have peace. I am strengthened in my emotions not to give up and give in and just quit and roll over and give up on the promise of God and my relationship with God.”

*God strengthens our mind. He gives us insight along the way. He strengthens our emotions with peace. He gives us physical strength to do the will of God. Now you will never be in a situation that is more difficult than the strength of the Holy Spirit **if** you will speak the Word of God and take your stand and say, “That strength is mine” rather than just giving up and giving in.*

The most natural thing to say in a difficult situation is—I hear it all the time. You have said it, and I have said it a few times over the years myself—“This is just too much or it is overwhelming. I cannot take it. I cannot endure it.”

The Holy Spirit would say, “Yes, actually you can. Actually it is not too much.” If it were too much, God would not have allowed it, even in your own wrong decision-making that sometimes plays into it or a great injustice being done against you. The Lord would say, “I would never have allowed that to happen to you if you did not have the ability to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit in it.

So in that situation, instead of the confession of our mouth being, “It is too much. It is overwhelming. I cannot take it. I do not know. I got to get out of this,” we need to put the Word of God in our mouth. We need to say what God says about us.

That is what Paul said about his own life when he was in prison, “I can do this. I do not like it. It is not easy, but I can have peace, and I can enjoy my relationship with God even in this dark dungeon. I can walk in the peace of God. I can fulfill the will of God even in this place in my life.” It is a remarkable reality.

Then he went on a few verses later in Philippians 4 and said, “My God shall supply all of your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Now this is mostly about finances, but it is more than finances in context of what Paul is talking about. Here is Paul in prison, he has no access to finances, but he says, “All of my needs will be met. I do not know how they will all be met or in what kind of situation.” I know he is in prison and he has other responsibilities outside the prison. He says, “I know that God in a supernatural way will make a way where there is no way.”

This is the confession of our mouth. This is what we speak over our heart. This is what we speak over our circumstances. This is what we speak over the attack of the enemy. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I can do the will of God in victory no matter what situation I am in."

One of the most horrible situations I can imagine was my brother Pat, whom some of you knew. He went to be with the Lord in 2007. He was paralyzed, totally paralyzed head-to-toe, for thirty-three years. The last months of his life, it was so horrible. Not only was he totally paralyzed, but he was also in a physical condition where he could not drink water. So they gave him water through an I.V. He could not put water or food in his mouth, so they gave it to him by I. V. He was totally conscious, starving, thirsty, could not drink, and because of the situation he could not talk.

So for the last months of his life, he was totally paralyzed, could not talk, could not eat, could not drink water. We would sit and talk to him, and he and I would talk. I would talk, and he would shake his head and mouth things. I mean his mouth was just parched. We talked about how he could do the will of God on that bed as much as I could do the will of God leading IHOPKC. I would say, "The will of God is different for you on that bed, but you can do the will of God as much as I can do the will of God." He was nodding, yes, that is right. He can do that which moves God and he has the same ability to receive even eternal rewards and do the will of God as anybody else in ministry. I said, "I am no different than you." He was agreeing with this, and we were talking about doing the will of God by trusting His leadership, thanking Him for His strength.

It was a miracle of a person just persevering with the Lord in the grace of God in the most painful situation that I can imagine. That went on for months, and then he died. Folks around were saying, "How could this possibly be happening?" That is another question for another time, but the point is, he could do the will of God with peace in his heart in the most horrible situation I could imagine nearly as, and he could do the will of God equally to me and walk in the same peace and walk in victory in the will of God. It just was a different assignment.

So many of you are in situations, not that severe I trust, but you are in situations that are desperate. The Lord says, "It is not too much. You will be surprised if you will interact with Me. I will actually strengthen your mind. I will give you insight on what to do step-by-step, little by little. I will give you peace in your heart. I will give you emotional fortitude. I will strengthen your body. I will supply your finances. I will not give you necessarily everything you want, but I will give you what you need, and I will give you what is ultimately for your good. You will see a reversal as this thing turns around." It is a remarkable reality.

So we need to do what Jesus did. When the devil confronted Jesus in Matthew 4, where three times the devil attacked Jesus and tempted Him, on all three occasions what Jesus did was spoke the Word of God. He said to the devil three times in Matthew 4, "It is written, it is written." Every attack He answered with the Bible says, "It is written... Here is what the truth of God's Word says." He would not answer the devil in any other way except for, "It is written..." Jesus took His stand against the enemy and made the confession of His mouth the truth of God's Word. Then the devil drew back.

James 4:7 tells us that we must resist the devil. God will not resist the devil for us; we use the Word of God as the sword of the Spirit. We resist the devil because the devil wants to tell us, "It is too much...you deserve it anyway...you are disqualified...you are never going to make it through it...it is never going to turn around...God is not going to supply your needs...this is going nowhere anyway...you were the one who made the mess...or maybe you did not, somebody else did it with such a severe injustice against you."

Our place in our relationship with God is very opposite of that, for God works together everything for our good. He will strengthen us in every situation in our mind, emotions, our body, and He will supply all of our needs. That is the stand we take in the face of adversity. We do not have to live in anxiety or fear or despair. We can

live in confidence, walking in peace and victory in doing the will of God, enjoying our relationship with God even in the midst of these very, very difficult situations.

- E. In our trials, we declare the truth to the enemy, “*It is written that all things work together for good, and I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, and my God shall supply all my needs.*”
- F. In Psalm 31, David committed his spirit (v. 5) and his times (v. 15) into God’s hand or care. By trusting God to intervene when he was mistreated, and by refusing to retaliate, he brought God into the conflict. This was partly how David engaged in spiritual warfare in personal conflicts.

⁵Into Your hand I commit my spirit...¹⁵My times are in Your hand. (Ps. 31:5, 15)

Just so you know, we are not going to get very far on these notes. It is my style to give you a whole bunch for you to read on your own. I am going to go just a few more minutes here. In Psalm 31 is one of my favorite passages from King David. You can read through Psalm 31 on your own. David is in one of the most difficult times in his life. He has enemies, and he has difficult circumstances going on, all kind of adversarial circumstances. Get familiar with Psalm 31 because this one needs to be one of your good friends, just figuratively speaking. Be familiar with Psalm 31, as it is how a man after God’s own heart responded under great adversity. It pleased the Lord how he responded.

There are two different phrases David said that I want to draw particular attention to. In verse 5 he said, “Into Your hand,” talking to the Lord, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit.” Then in verse 15 a few verses later he said, “My times are in Your hands.” In other words, I commit the timing into Your hand as well. These two statements are very significant.

1. To “commit our spirit” into God’s hands (v. 5) is to commit to Him the *outcome* of all that deeply touches our spirit—our reputation, money, possessions, position, impact, etc.

When David was saying, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit,” David was not on his death bed saying, “I am now ready to die. Receive me in paradise.” That is not what David was saying. When he said, “Into Your hands I commit my spirit,” he was saying, “I commit to You the outcome. I trust You to take care of the outcome of the things that are the most deeply concerning to my spirit. The things that are most deeply valuable to me.” That would be his money, his heart in God, his possession, his ministry assignment, his reputation, these things that were very dear to him and important to him.

He said, “I commit my spirit to You”—the things that are most valuable to me, the outcome I commit to You—meaning I am not going to try to figure it all out myself and solve all of these problems. They are out of my reach. Either You intervene or they will not be solved. I am not going to spend all of my time over-thinking the situation, but rather into Your hands I commit my spirit.

2. To commit “our times” into God’s hands (v. 15) is to trust His *timing* in helping us.

Then he goes on in verse 15, and he says that not only is he committing the answer to God, that God will give the answer, but he is committing the timing of how God gives the answer; it is the time he commits to God. It may not be his timing, and often it is not our timing. The Lord’s timing is different from our timing. Again God will not always give us what we want, but He will give us what is ultimately for our good and that serves that larger storyline in our life. So when David was saying, “Into Your hands I commit my spirit, and I commit the timing of the answer into Your hands,” that was a very powerful statement.

- G. When David committed a difficult situation into God’s hands, it was a statement of devotion and an expression of spiritual warfare that invoked God’s intervention. He was not being passive by putting the situation into God’s hands. He was actively bringing God into the situation in a greater measure.

It was not just a statement of devotion; it was a statement of “I love You, and I trust You.” It was a love statement of trust, affection, and confidence in the Lord’s leadership. It was also a statement of spiritual warfare, because what David was doing was invoking God’s activity into the difficult situation. He was not just giving a casual statement of devotion. This was an act of warfare. I mean the most effective thing David could do against his enemies was invoke God’s involvement saying, “God, I am not going to destroy my enemies. I am going to put it in Your hands.” When David put it into God’s hands that brought God’s intervention in a greater measure into the circumstance. That was the most effective thing he could have done against his enemies, to invoke God in it in God’s way and time by committing his spirit into God’s hands or committing the situation that was so dear to him into the hands of the Lord.

In Luke 23 Jesus used that very phrase from Psalm 31. On the cross Jesus quoted David’s psalm. He said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” He was quoting David. Jesus was not only saying, “I am going to die, and I commit My spirit to You because I am going to see You in paradise.” He was saying much more than that. He was saying, “Father, You promised Me that what I am doing would bring redemption to the nations, and You promised Me that I would be the King over all the nations. I am committing that promise into Your hands. Everything looks lost here. I am on the cross, and these promises You have given to Me as Redeemer and King look impossible to accomplish. I commit them into Your hands.” It included that He would be in God’s presence when He died, but Jesus was referring to much more than just being in the presence of the Father when He died.

- H. When we commit ourselves into God’s hands in times of difficulty, we are making a transaction with God to trust Him to intervene and establish **His will** in our lives, in **His way** and in **His timing**.
1. This involves **transferring our personal rights** into His hands and thus transferring responsibility to Him.
 2. For example, because our money has been committed to Him, if someone steals it, they are stealing from Him. He is responsible to intervene to get the money back in His time and way.

II. WE REJOICE IN TRIBULATION (ROM. 5:3-5): UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

- A. Paul gave insight into how trials cause us to experience more of God’s glory (Rom. 5:3-5). He connected three significant ideas—*perseverance*, *character*, and *hope*—in a way that is not automatically obvious to us. We must see “God’s logic” in how these virtues are connected.
- ³***We also glory [rejoice] in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;***
⁴***and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*** ⁵***Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit... (Rom. 5:3-5)***
- B. The word *tribulation* includes different types of difficulties referred to as *various trials* (Jas. 1:2). Everyone experiences pressures such as physical or emotional pain, financial lack, various fears, being mistreated, etc. Persecution is the pressure that is mentioned most in the New Testament.
- C. **Knowing**: We only rejoice in trials by knowing “God’s logic” in how they relate to perseverance, character, and hope. Trials cause despair unless we see a purpose in them. We rejoice only when we see the good that is worked in us. It is essential to understand this to maximize the benefit of trials.

1. Transformation is not an automatic result of trials. It occurs as we respond rightly to God. We do this best when we understand the process that is occurring.
 2. The devil tells us that our trials are proof that we do not have God's favor, that we are a failure who is forgotten by God, disqualified from His blessing, and destined to fail, or that our relationship with God is not genuine and sincere.
 3. Paul's point was that trials do not contradict God's love, favor, power, and blessing in our life; rather, they can help prepare us to increase our capacity to experience them more.
 4. We do not rejoice in the tribulations themselves, but in their effects. We rejoice in what they produce in us as we respond to the Spirit.
- D. **Perseverance:** This speaks of our *fortified resolve* or commitment to *realign our heart* continually to be committed to love, obey, believe, and pursue Jesus instead of giving up, giving in to sin and unbelief, or drawing back from pursuing Jesus with all of our heart.
1. Pressure causes us to *ask questions* about the purpose of our life, the condition of our life and relationship to God, and why we should persevere in pursuing God without quitting. It causes us to rehearse the consequences of persevering in God or those of giving up (quitting).
 2. Trials are meant to lead us to realign our heart to resolve to live closer to Him, to live in our identity in God, and to press in for the Spirit's breakthrough solution to our problems.
 3. Pressure, when responded to rightly, help us to *focus* and think clearly, to be desperate to seek the Spirit's breakthrough, and to lose the "taste" for things outside of God's will.
 4. Pressure causes us to work our "faith muscle." Resistance training builds muscle strength in our body. A muscle is strengthened when it is exercised beyond the norm by using weight that breaks down and builds up the muscle.
- ¹⁷*Our light affliction...is working for us an...eternal weight of glory... (2 Cor. 4:17)*
5. A butterfly's struggle in a cocoon is necessary to develop its wings. To help the butterfly by cutting its cocoon would result in its wings remaining undeveloped.
- E. **Character:** This speaks of a long-term change in our attitudes and actions. When we persevere in choosing to pursue, obey, and trust the Lord's leadership, it leads to a change in our character.
- ³*...tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Rom. 5:3-4)*
1. There is a connection between *what we do* in our character and *how much we see* in God and His ways. As we grow in character, our capacity to receive understanding increases.
- ⁸*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Mt. 5:8)*
2. Our obedience is not mature (godly character) until it is walked out under pressure.
- ²*...count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience [perseverance]. ⁴But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete [in character], lacking nothing. (Jas 1:2-4)*

3. After Abraham offered Isaac, God said, “Now I know you fear God” (Gen. 22:12). Patience is not merely the ability to wait, but it is how you act while you are waiting.
- F. **Hope**: is the confident expectation of experiencing God’s glory in this age and in the age to come. Hope comes from seeing more clearly. *Our capacity to see our hope in Christ increases as we grow in character or purity* (Mt. 5:8). Paul’s confidence in God increased as he grew in godly character.
³*...tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.* (Rom. 5:3-4)
- G. **Hope that does not disappoint**: We will not be disappointed when all the information about our life in God is made known on the last day as we see the outcome of what we hoped for, how much of God’s glory we experienced in this life, and how tribulations resulted in good fruit in us.
⁵*Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit...* (Rom. 5:5)
 1. The revelation of God’s love poured into our heart by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5) continually assures us that our hope in Christ is real. Whatever we hope for is far too low (1 Cor. 2:9).
⁹*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.* (1 Cor. 2:9)
 2. We need not fear being disqualified from receiving God’s love—even when we were enemies He loved us. Paul develops the idea of the love of God not disappointing us (Rom. 5:6-10).
¹⁰*If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God...much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* (Rom. 5:10)
- H. We can be confident in Jesus’ leadership instead of being angry with God, people, or ourselves in our trials. Our response of anger does not help anything nor does it accomplish God’s purpose (Jas 1:20).
²⁰*For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.* (Jas. 1:20, NAS)

III. RESPONDING IN FAITH

- A. Faith or confidence in God releases more of His blessing into our life and circumstances (Mt. 9:29). Cultivating faith with an attitude of trust has many implications for our life. It is foundational to experiencing more of what Jesus provided for us and for enjoying our relationship with Him.
²⁹*Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.”* (Mt. 9:29)

Now Jesus is the One who said it in Matthew 9:29 that He established the principle that “according to your faith let it be unto you,” that one of the primary principles of the kingdom is that God will release more on the basis of His people who have faith, or active confidence, in His leadership. If God’s people have this confidence in His leadership and confidence in His promises, instead of yielding to despair and just giving into anxiety and giving in to condemnation, they can resist those normal human emotions. The enemy stirs up some of those emotions, but some are human, and the combination of the two is quite a negative combination of our unrenewed thinking plus the inspiration of demons helping us to live in a spirit of fear and anxiety and condemnation and guilt and all of that kind of thing.

What we do is we use the Word of God as a sword, and we make our confession of the Word over our heart. We speak the truth of what God says, about who He is, and what He promised us and the benefits of salvation, the authority we have, and who we are in Christ. We are kings and priests before Him, we are coheirs with Christ, and we are more than conquerors. Beloved, we are not just victim to the whims of Satan's attack. When Satan attacks us, we can resist it; we have authority in Christ to say no. We are not just victim of the whims of whatever emotion comes into our mind. You say, "Well, I feel miserable today. I feel overwhelmed today. I think that is the state of my life. I am just miserable. I am overwhelmed. I am in despair." No, we say that is not who I am! That is an emotion I have, but I am going to resist that emotion.

Beloved, did you know that you can actually decide in whom you put your trust and in what you have faith? You can put your trust in yourself and live in despair and anxiety. Or, you can put your trust in the Word of God. Now the Bible talks about the confession of our faith. The confession of our faith is a principle that is very important because what we think and what we say with our mouth and how we feel in our emotions are deeply connected with one another. What we think, what we say, and what we feel are deeply connected. This affects the outcome in our life. The words of our mouth are very important because our brain and our emotions actually will follow the words of our mouth. If we speak the word of God, our minds will get more renewed. Our hearts and our emotions will get renewed by declaring the truth of the Word of God instead of just declaring, "I am overwhelmed... it is too much... it is too bad... no way is it going to work."

The Lord says, "No, no! I am Your Father. I am the Father of glory. I have sufficient power to turn this whole thing around. Give Me an opportunity. My relationship with you is very, very dear to Me."

The confession of our mouth is what we believe about God's leadership in our life. The confession of our mouth is what we believe about God's promises. The confession of our mouth is what we believe about who we are in Christ according to the Word of God.

I will assure you this: that the Lord gives us more according to our faith, according to our interaction with His leadership with this active confidence where we will speak what the Word says over our heart, over our circumstances, and over the attack of the enemy. We will speak what we believe the Word says about who He is and about His leadership and about who we are to Him. I tell you, more will happen in your life.

Why not enjoy the journey with the Lord? I am talking about peace in our heart, even though the circumstances are difficult. I do not mean enjoy the circumstances, but why not walk in peace and have victory in the will of God. Even if you are a young man paralyzed on a hospital bed, you are doing the will of God even in the way you are responding to God. Why not walk in enjoyment with God? Then we turn around some months or years later and we see the great reversal that God was right. He really did work it to our own good.

Amen and amen, let's stand.

- B. We grow in faith by learning what available to us in Christ. A trusting attitude of faith will bring peace to our life instead of trying to figure everything out and fixing everything.
- C. We can avoid much unnecessary anguish and anxiety by deciding to let go of the unproductive overthinking about our problems. Some are so preoccupied asking "Why, God?" and "When, God?" that they never develop their faith. Many are consumed with trying to figure out the answer to each dilemma in their life. We can trust that if God does not do it our way, then His way is better.
- D. Faith that trusts the Lord is a decision that we make to walk in faith and enjoy God while He is helping our problems. Our trust is ours to put anywhere we choose. We can put our faith and trust in the Lord, or in ourselves, or in people.

- E. Our emotions follow wherever our mind goes. Our thoughts, words, and emotions are deeply interconnected. What we think and what comes out of our mouth greatly affects our emotional condition.
- F. Many godly people are stuck spiritually because they believe the devil's lies. These lies become their reality. The only way to know when the devil is lying to you is to be educated in the God's Word. We must learn the truth about God, the devil, and ourselves.
- G. We must meditate on God's Word by letting it roll over and over in our mind as we talk to Jesus about it. We know how to meditate because when we worry, we mediate on our problems by letting them roll over and over in our mind talking to ourselves.
- H. We can talk ourselves into anxiety, but just as surely we can talk ourselves out of it and into faith. We talk ourselves into a negative mood by rehearsing our problems separated from God's promises.
- I. We do not have to bow down to emotions that control and dictate how we live. We must learn what the Word says about who we are in Christ and how God will work in our life.
- J. We can be confident that He is working even when we cannot see or feel His work. Often the Lord will not let us solve all of our problems. He wants us to rely on Him.
⁶...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:6)
- K. Life is a process, not an event. If we fail today or if things fall apart, we can begin again. No matter what, it is never too late to start doing and believing the right things. It is never too late for a new beginning in your life. We must let go of painful things, mistakes, failures, and wrong decisions. We do not earn new beginnings, but we step out in faith and believe the Word of God.