

## **Victory in Adversity**

A few months ago, a woman from Homestead, Florida, was interviewed on the national news. She had seen her city rise from the rubble of a horrible hurricane to become the city it is today. She vividly described the conditions immediately after Hurricane Andrew in 1992. Surrounded by ruins, robbed by looters, the people lived for weeks without power or water. The account of the people's unwavering will to fight back and rebuild their lives was quite moving.

Today, Homestead is a brand new city. New schools, malls, restaurants, and hotels have been built; the city does not even resemble its former self. The tenacity to fight back against evil circumstances is strong in people. Yet, it can be even stronger in the heart of a Christian as you rebuild a life destroyed by Satan and his works.

### **The Source of Suffering**

God did not send the hurricane which destroyed Homestead any more than He sends temptations, trials, and afflictions into our lives. James 1:13 tells us, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

Rather, God is who sends the relief and the power to rebuild. The Bible assures us, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations" (2 Peter 2:9). And God's power to rebuild is always greater than the power of destruction.

So what is the source of suffering? There is no suffering where there is sin. Before Adam's sin, there was no suffering in the Garden, and there will be no suffering in heaven. There are three sources of the suffering in a Christian's life on earth: Satan, others, and ourselves. All three are a result of original sin in the Garden of Eden.

### **Our Worst Enemy**

Most Christians think Satan is their worst enemy, saying, "Without Satan, we would never sin." This is not true. In fact, sin begins in us. Satan and all of his demons will be bound for one thousand years during the millennium, yet

there will still be sin on the earth. Satan can only do in and to us what we allow him to do. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). This is the nature of the flesh — it tempts us to abandon the will of God and solve our own problems.

Our worst enemy is ourselves. Satan probably takes notes when he sees some of the creative ways we produce trouble for ourselves! I'm sure he is fascinated by all the ways we invent to sin.

### **Out of the Will of God**

Suffering comes to us at two different times: when we are out of the will of God and when we are in the will of God. In other words, we are never exempt from suffering — it can come to us at any time!

When we are out of the will of God and there is sin present in our lives, we have no one to blame but ourselves. Our suffering is self induced. In such times, "quietly enduring" our troubles will not win us favor from God or sympathy from Satan. First Peter 2:20 says, "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

At such times, we must begin with repentance for our sin. God can send conviction into our lives when we have sinned, and discipline through His word (2 Timothy 3:16) into our hearts (Hebrews 12:9).

Not all self-induced suffering is the result of sin — suffering can also come from ignorance. In other words, you do not have to sin to open the door for Satan. You can simply act out of ignorance to the Word of God or the Spirit's leading. Much of the suffering we encounter is due to our own bad decisions. In such cases, we need to be mature enough to admit our error, wait on God's wisdom, and let Holy Spirit redirect our steps.

### **Suffering while in the Will of God**

We can also suffer when we are walking in the will of God. Psalm 34:19 says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

When we are in the will of God and there is no sin present in our lives, we can squarely put the blame on Satan. In other words, Satan would rather

afflict us because we have opened the door through sin or ignorance, but he is not limited to this.

Jesus suffered while in the will of God; He never committed a sin, yet He suffered. He told us we would also suffer and be persecuted: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Matthew 5:11). This is also the time when we can rejoice in our suffering because we will not only come through our troubles but will also receive great rewards in eternity (Matthew 5:12).

Jesus is our example in suffering (John 15:20, 1 Peter 2:21). He also is our example for how to handle suffering: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). God loves to deliver His children out of Satan's plans when we put ourselves into His hands.

### **Why Does God Allow Us To Suffer?**

This is probably the most-asked question among Christians today. If God does not bring suffering into our lives, and if God is truly compassionate and loving toward us, then why doesn't He stop suffering from coming?

The whole issue can be boiled down to the wisdom of God. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by [through] the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10).

God won the greatest battle of all against Satan at the resurrection of Jesus (Ephesians 1:19,20). He has chosen to leave us and Satan on the earth to prove to Satan and all of his demons that the victory can continue through God's children, the Church, even though Jesus is absent from the earth. God has left us on earth, not to escape adversity, but to win against it. He has given us superior weapons and intelligence against Satan. God loves to watch us take on the kingdom of darkness and win our daily battles. In fact, He receives glory in our victories over Satan.

### **Suffering Is An Important Part of the Christian Life**

That is a difficult statement for many Christians to accept. But the truth is, no victory comes without a fight. Satan's job is to block as many of our

blessings as possible. Our job is to walk into enemy territory and take back our stolen blessings. Before Abraham could tithe to Melchizedek, he had to take back his family and spoils from the wicked kings. Before David could ascend to the throne of Israel, he had to take back the families of his men and regain the spoils of war.

Although Jesus has won the great battle at the Cross and Resurrection, He has left the responsibility to the Church to recapture the blessings of healing, deliverance, and prosperity from our enemy, Satan. Just as Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil, so are we to continue in His earthly ministry. He promised that those who left all to follow Him would have a hundred-fold return, yet even our hundred-fold return comes with persecution (Matthew 19:29).

God doesn't see adversity and suffering in the same way we do. In God's eyes, adversity is:

1. An opportunity for advancement. Suffering brings a challenge. When we accept the challenge, we can advance.
2. An opportunity for victory. Victory only comes in battle. Without a battle, we could have no victories in our Christian life. The good news is, we are guaranteed a victory in every battle we face.
3. An opportunity for growth. Maturity comes through struggles. This is true both in our natural lives and in our spiritual lives. We hate to see our own children have to go through struggles in life, but we know it is the only way for them to grow emotionally as well as physically.
4. An opportunity to glorify God. God is glorified through the use and growth of our faith (Romans 4:20). The greatest use of faith is in the struggles of life. Faith is a weapon against Satan. What good is a weapon if there is no battle?
5. An opportunity to develop patience. Coming through trials is the only way to develop patience (Romans 5:3, James 1:3). What good is patience if there is nothing to be patient about?
6. An opportunity to develop character. The fruit of the spirit is developed under pressure. We often believe God is anxious for us to come out of a trial, but actually, God is more interested in our development during the trial

than in its end — the trip more than the destination. Our character is shaped during the trial, and we become stronger at the end than we were at the beginning.

7. An opportunity for blessing. God can turn every type of cursing into a blessing, every battle into a victory (Romans 8:28).

The next time adversity comes your way, perhaps you will look at it in a different light. If your suffering is self-induced, allow the Word of God to correct you. If it is the result of persecution for righteousness sake, stay in faith, and watch for God to turn it around. You will find that adversity is not a tool to defeat you but an opportunity for great blessing!

Bob Yandian

**© 2001 by Bob Yandian Ministries. Reproduction of written text in whole or part without written permission is prohibited. All Rights Reserved.**