

February 2006: When It Rains, It Pours

by Aaron Greenway

A few years ago, my family went through some very difficult things. First, my grandfather had been diagnosed with cancer in the chest, and so he went in for radiation treatment causing his lung to go „fibrosis%, a loss of elasticity of the lung. Because he was only able to use one lung, he was attached to an oxygen machine. However, the day came when he caught pneumonia in the other lung which would do no less but end his life, a great shock to our family. Three months later, my parents went up to Minnesota on vacation. While visiting the zoo, my dad had a terrible stroke. Thankfully, the zoo was close to the hospital; otherwise he would not be alive today. But it didn't end there. Three months after that, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Jesus summed it up very well when He said that in this life we would have tribulation (John 16:33), because now a dear friend of mine in Peru has to battle leukemia. On top of that, my former pastor of the church I used to attend in Dallas has cancer.

The saints are suffering everywhere, and we wonder, „Where is God in all of this?% The problem is not only that it rains, but that when it rains, it pours, as the trials keep on mounting. But like a pastor once said, “If you want faith, if you want to fall in love with God, get yourself into something that only God can get you out of, and you will love God even more.”

The Apostle Peter had an answer to those that went through hard times. I Peter 1:6-7 says, “In this you greatly rejoiced, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

How interesting that Peter called it a “trial” almost as if it were a temptation of the devil. It is because the Enemy wants you to give up and not trust the Lord. It is so hard not to throw in the towel when you see the death of your loved one. But I keep learning that God,s power is displayed during these times, because we will never depend on God until there is nothing more than to depend on Him. God wants every part of us. And by the way, He will get it even if it takes a few bumps along the way.

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Another reason for going through trials is so that we don't become stuck or stagnant somewhere spiritually. Do you remember in the book of Exodus, when the Israelites suffered in Egypt? Moses had come to their rescue, to take them out of Egypt, out from under the heavy hand of Pharaoh. When Pharaoh refused, the plagues fell upon the Egyptians; but he continued to harden his heart, that is, until he saw his first born die. God did so many things for the people of Israel, like parting the Red Sea, feeding them manna in the desert, giving them victory over their enemies, and taking them into the Promised Land—all of that just so the Israelites could say, "The Lord brought us all the way out here to die. We would have been better off staying in Egypt." God had provided everything for them just to turn around and get slapped in the face, as if God had done nothing for them. Can you imagine how God must have felt in that moment?

But, do you know what? We would have done the same thing. We would have cursed God as well, being spiritually dulled and hardened. So we see that all of the miracles, the signs and wonders from God would never convince us. Instead, we must be in a place where we really depend on the Lord as we identify with the suffering that Christ went through, and as we experience the changing power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. A sinful heart can never respond to God unless God touches that heart, and many times, God must keep us on a short leash so that we never become hardened against Him, so that we never forget our wonderful God who has given it all for us. If it weren't for that, we would end up becoming a bunch of egotistical ingrates.

For this reason, we thank our God for the trials. We give Him thanks for all that we have gone through because without that, we wouldn't be who we are. All of the emotional burden that I carried as a young man, all of the harsh things that my family has had to endure has not happened for nothing, but God has had a purpose. For this reason, we love God more, we understand Him more, and by His grace, we are more faithful, whereas we wouldn't have been

otherwise. We had to weather the storm in order to see the rainbow. Therefore, I rejoice in the fact that when it rains it pours. I rejoice that God has had that much compassion on me, not to let the trials crush me, but that I would be changed through them and conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, the Son. That you can take to the bank!

Something to ponder...

Your brother,
Aaron Greenway