

Fruit or Failure in Trouble

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I'd like to take you to the Book of Job and read a large portion from The Message, a contemporary paraphrase of the Word of God. We'll begin in chapter 36 and read on through part of chapter 37. The best title I can give this message is "**Fruit or Failure in Trouble**" – and we'll see that, always, every time, without fail, the choice is ours!

Never has there been a period of time in my entire life when I have seen so many reports of real tragedies in countless lives: cancers, sudden deaths (not just old people dying, but young people passing away as well), loss of jobs, marriages in serious trouble, illnesses of various types that we never heard of years ago (some incurable). This is a unique moment in history. After reading a number of my emails recently, I said to Shirlee, my secretary, "I cannot believe this isn't the Tribulation!" Well, I can believe it's not, but there are so many things that are just – *trouble* – big trouble. I know very few families today that could say, "We're completely trouble-free." There are children away from God and so many other things that come to mind that are so troubling. I suppose that, maybe – just MAYBE – *there's a purpose*. ☺ I mean, there's just too – too many things going on to be simply circumstantial. Could you believe this with me? And that's why we think of and turn to Job.

What I want to know is what that purpose is – God's purpose – because I want to **choose fruitfulness** in trouble, **not failure**. And the interesting thing is (you may not like this, but it is very true!) under every negative circumstance – **the choice is ours**. We can go through them bearing *fruit* or experiencing *failure*. **It's what we do in the midst of trouble that makes the difference.**

Job – you know his story – a righteous man, a good man, a man we would want on the Board or Staff of the church. He was a man who wanted his children to serve God and even went to their homes to hold "Home Meetings," if you will. Suddenly, Job is stricken with boils – extremely painful sores all over his body. God, we learn through the conversation with the enemy reported in Job 1 (vs.6 and following), allows some things to come upon him physically (2:6) as well as all the other losses that preceded this physical assault (1:13ff). Job had suffered the loss of possessions (1:13-17) and the loss of his family members (1:18,19). The losses just went on and on until he simply felt like he had nothing else left, and *now* the physical thing!

Job's wife is not real, uh, smart in counseling her husband. ☺ Her counsel is: "Why don't you take enough pills – and die?" Or, she said it exactly like this: "Why don't you *curse God and die*?" (2:9). In other words, "why don't you get out of this situation? Get out of it the easiest way you can get out of it. Just do it – end your agony!"

Job's response to her was priceless! He basically said, "Look, He's the One that gave me life and He gave me everything I lost... (1:21; 2:10). It was all a gift of His goodness to me." What an attitude! "How can I curse the One that gave me everything good I've ever been, everything good I've ever had. He... God is wonderful!" (1:20).

But the longer Job sits on the ash-heap and the more visitors... those "wonderful friends" who come to, and I quote: "*Comfort him...*" (2:11e). ☺ I can just hear you chuckling – it tells me that you have a few friends like that. ☺ And what these friends want to figure out for Job is similar to what I'm saying today. They want to know *why* their friend is in that terrible state. They know that he has fasted more, prayed more, praised more, worshipped more, been a better man than they – and they want to know, in view of his exemplary life, why all this trouble still has come upon him.

So, they decide (which is what a lot of people call “prophecy” ☺) – *they* decide what the problem must be. And what they decide, these precious brothers who come to see miserable Job ☺, is that there has to be sin in his life or God would never allow all of what he’s going through – because God’s a good God and everything God does is good. We sing it almost every Sunday in our choruses. “Everything God does is good,” and they know that “God is a good God!”

And so each one of these men comes from his own way (2:11b), the Bible says – each of them comes with his presupposed message for Job. When you come with a *presupposed message* to me, do not call it “prophetic!” If you have figured it out, if you see things you *think* you can change by talking, just say, “I feel thus and such...” or “I’m going to say this...” – because it’s from you. When the true prophetic flows from the heart of God, it will witness both to the giver (or declarer) *and to the person who receives*. I hope that helps you in knowing how to minister what is in your heart. We *are* to encourage one another (Rom.15:14; Col.3:16) and what we say can have great value, but we must not confuse the Source.

So, here is Job, and he’s about had it with these guys. They’ve been taking turns talking, saying, “Well, it’s *this* and it’s *that* and it’s the *other* thing.” Now, here in verse 22 of chapter 36 – Elihu is speaking. He had his first turn, but he’s back on it again. He says, “Now, I’m going to *defend* God” (36:2). Everything these men say is a defense for God, and much of what they say of Him is quite true.

Can you listen to something – from me – today? Don’t defend God – there’s no need for you to do that. When people say to you, “Well, I don’t know why the ‘Almighty’ or ‘the man upstairs’... (Those are two clues right there that these people don’t really know Him! ☺) When people say to you, “I don’t know why ‘the big man up there’ let this happen to me,” you do not need to go on the defensive on behalf of God! A good answer to that statement is: “I don’t know why either! Let’s go to Him and find out!” ☺

Now, Elihu is talking and he says this: “*Do you have any idea how powerful God is? Have you ever heard of a teacher like him? Has anyone ever had to tell him what to do, or correct him, saying, ‘You did that all wrong!’? Remember, then, to praise his workmanship, which is so often celebrated in song.*”

I pause here because I want to talk to you about this. How many times have we sung the words to the Omniscient, Omni-present, All-powerful God and then, even as we leave the service, we’ve talked negatively with one another: “I don’t know why God...” “I don’t know why I’m still hurting...” “I don’t know why God doesn’t answer my prayers...” “I don’t...” – and **we undo the entirety of our worship – by negative talk – which He will NOT hear!**

Verse 25: “*Everybody sees it; nobody is too far away to see it.*” No one can escape from God. “*Take a long, hard look. See how great He is...*” Think about how many times we have actually sung this sermon! I love it! “*...infinite, greater than anything you could ever imagine or figure out!*”

Verses 27 and 28: “*He pulls water up out of the sea, distills it, and fills up his rain-cloud cisterns. Then the skies open up and pour out soaking showers on everyone.*” Except on Phoenix! ☺ I just have to do that when reading these longer portions of Scripture – just to see if you’re really paying attention ☺. Besides, I live in the Valley of the Sun and it’s mostly rain-less! ☺ Alright now – listen to this, verse 29: “*Does anyone have the slightest idea how this happens? How he arranges the clouds, how he speaks in thunder? Just look at that lightning, his sky-filling light show illumining the dark depths of the sea! These are the symbols of his sovereignty, his generosity, his loving care.*”

What a God! I said, “**What a God!**” Maybe *now* would be a great time for us to go back to worshipping Him! I mean... We’re seeing that He’s so BIG! So – wonderful! Can anyone figure this whole thing out? Scientists will give some observations, even explanations, but they’re not “figured-out” ones – they can’t explain *how* He does it only that it is done. Oh, yes, we know how to distill water and now we put it in a bottle and charge people a fortune – the ones that are stupid enough to pay for it! ☺ Okay that’s about all of us – me included... ☺ When I was a little girl, if you would have told me, “Some day, you

won't be buying soda pop in a bottle, you'll be buying water that way..." I would have howled with laughter! ☺ And you would have done the same! ☺

Elihu goes on to say, "*He hurls arrows of light, taking sure and accurate aim.*" Now you remember that verse when you hear some of the window-shaking strikes – some of the lightning strikes that accompany thunderstorms. He has "accurate aim."

There is a divine purpose (when we have trouble or know about someone else's trouble) way beyond anything you can know! But what we do is to sympathize: "Oh, isn't it terrible that" It isn't terrible – it's trouble! Hurlled by the arrow of the Almighty and it finds its point, the bull's eye – for a reason – that He does not have to explain to any of us!

"The High God roars in the thunder, angry against evil." (vs.33).

Now, I want to tell you this: Number one – **God is good.** He is just good. Many preachers have you repeat that responsively: "God is good" and then you say, "All the time!" And then, "All the time..." and you respond: "God is good." Very simply, He **is** good! But we have had so much teaching about His goodness that we have forgotten – **He is holy!** That's another truth about our God that we sing: "You are holy, God. Holy."

When we recognize that God is holy, then we also must know He gets very angry! Angry at sin and evil (remember His dealings with the Israelites throughout Old Testament history). God is thundering over sinful situations, even now. And we always seem so *amazed* at that! But don't you know that if you would listen for the still small voice (1Kngs.19:11-13) and say, "God, what're You doing? Why all this thunder?" He'd say, "I'm answering your prayers. You've been interceding on behalf of your family – on behalf of your city – on behalf of your church – on behalf of your nation..." Hopefully you have been busy on your knees! "I am answering your prayers."

We sing it – the words of that beautiful hymn (and if you don't mean it, you'd better get there!) – "**Thy** Kingdom come! **Thy** will be done!" Well, what? Do you think it will just be a little soft-shoe that God's going to do when He comes in? That He'll come in like an old song-and-dance routine? "Hello there! I heard your prayer." ☺ No! He's looking down and sees the sin – and not just in the sinners or the unbelievers – but the sins of omission and commission and neutrality among His own people! And He roars in thunder over that as well!

Why the *roar*? For the same reason that when our children don't hear us the first time... they likely will the second. ☺ God is going to get the attention of His people – and of people everywhere!

Elihu is talking about this God that's thundering – Job 37, verse 1: "*Whenever this happens, my heart stops – I'm stunned, I can't catch my breath. Listen to it! Listen to his thunder, the rolling, rumbling thunder of his voice.*"

I challenge you. We have just entered our season – for the thunder. This Valley of the Sun enters the monsoon season during the summer months when we likely will have plenty of thunderstorms, replete with roaring noise and lightnings. I challenge you, *this* time, as you witness it to meaningfully say, "God, I know You're speaking and I thank You for it. I don't always hear the words – I'm like those who rode with Paul (Ac.9). I don't know exactly what you're saying in the thunder, but I know that You are answering the prayers." And if you live elsewhere, you can still hear Him roar in the stormy weather where you are and know He is speaking.

We have prayed and prayed. I've lived in this Valley more than 21 years and have attended dozens of prayer meetings where we have interceded on behalf of this metropolitan area. "Oh God! Send Revival! Open hearts. Cleanse Your people. Bring in the lost." I trust many of you have been a part of something like that where you live. And I should think you could get very excited when you realize that **God is**

thundering and He is either saying, “I’m here!” or, “I am going to make Myself known and it will be clear that it is I!”

In Job, it goes on (37:3): “*He lets loose his lightnings from horizon to horizon, lighting up the earth from pole (north) to pole (south). In their wake, the thunder echoes his voice, powerful and majestic. He lets out all the stops, he holds nothing back. No one can mistake that voice...*” I add the parenthesis “though they may not understand the words.”

Tell me if you really believe *man* can make the sound of thunder like the real thing. Which of our great scientists can shoot something through one cloud so that it hits another cloud and *rumbles* through – sounding exactly like our God’s thunder? Oh, Church. **Our God is an awesome God!!**

“*His word*” (verse 5) “*thundering so wondrously, his mighty acts staggering our understanding. He orders the snow, ‘Blanket the earth!’ and the rain, ‘Soak the whole countryside!’ No one can escape [the weather – it’s just there – everywhere.] No one can escape from God. Wild animals take shelter, crawling into their dens, when blizzards roar out of the north and freezing rain crusts the land. It’s God’s breath that forms the ice, it’s God’s breath that turns lakes and rivers solid. And yes, it’s God who fills clouds with rainwater and hurls lightnings from them every which way. He puts them through their paces – first this way, then that – commands them to do what he says all over the world.*”

Earthquakes in diverse places. Floods. Storms. *Unusual* weather. Hello? You have access to it in your living room where your television blasts it. You look at those weather maps – “It’s never been like *this* in *that* place.” “It’s never been that hot here...” And then all of a sudden... “It’s never been that rainy there!” Look at us right here in Phoenix. We’re saying, “Send the rain! Send the rain! Send the rain!” And God says, “I’m busy in Tucson!” ☺ I hope it gets their attention! [Recently, Tucson had been subject to flash floods from the monsoons there, yet the storms dissipate before reaching most of Phoenix.]

Everything we see in what we so glibly label “nature” – ought to stir the awareness of the *awesomeness* of our God! The *greatness* of our God! How **BIG** He is! He is out there on display! When you look up at that full, lovely, gorgeous moon – when it’s as clear as it can be – you will see the greatness and the wonder of our God – even there as the stars pop out and come into view around the moon. Our God knows every one of them by name (Is.40:26; Ps.147:4) – He commands them into their spaces and into their places (Gen.1:16; Jb.9:7,8; Ps.8:3). But the Bible says He *hurled* the lightnings out there!

Aw Church – I’m trying to tell us that in our puny little minds, our God has been too small! We come to Him with some little thing.... Well, yes, I know it’s big to us, but we wail to Him: “Oh, my God – if there’s any way possible! Dear God! If You...” Of course it’s *possible!* With man it’s impossible, but with God... what? “*All things are possible!*” (Mt.19:26; Lk.18:27; 1:37; Jer.32:17).

Now, here’s my text verse – Job 37:13. This is the text that gave birth to this whole message. Are you ready for it? “*Whether for discipline or grace or extravagant love, he makes sure they make their mark.*” Let’s read it again... “*Whether for discipline or grace or extravagant love, he makes sure they make their mark.*” Selah.

We’ve been talking about the elements, the weather, thunderings and lightnings. *Now* I want to talk about any “cloud” in your life. May I just be direct? If there is a cloud that has come over your life, **there is a purpose for that cloud.** And it isn’t going to move away or do anything different – hear me! – until you make a decision whether your “trouble” is going to produce *FRUIT* or *FAILURE*.

The Bible says the Lord *hides* Himself from us (Isa.45:15; Ezk.39:23; Mic.3:4) (or from anyone that He needs to be hidden from) in a cloud. **The Lord is in your cloud!** (Ex.16:10; 19:9; 20:21; 40:38). You see – **we just have to find Him in there!** But He is there!

Here we are walking along in life – I could sing this old one: “walking in the sunshine of His love” – and all of a sudden – ::whhoooooo:: over the top of the sunshine comes a cloud. It’s dark and a little scary. But I resist it! I cast it out! ☺ I even shout (just to display my power to dispel the darkness ☺): “I will not have this! I have *authority* in the Kingdom! In Je---...” You’ve been through it, too, I am certain – tell the truth! But – the cloud doesn’t move! ☺ Yours or mine! ☺

So, now what are you going to do with it? This dark cloud around you? “I don’t... I guess I just don’t have enough faith.” So – you go to a friend – and the friend casts it out! ☺ If you can hear me here, I’m helping you. ☺ So, you go to this friend that is *known* to have power – with God – and she speaks to your cloud! ☺ demanding it leave in Jesus’ name. But there you are, still standing in the middle – of that cloud. So, you try again: “You devil-cloud! Get off of me! Get out of here! Go! I demand you go!” And then God so quietly speaks to your heart, “I’ve made sure the cloud has reached its mark.” Think about that for just a moment.

“And you will be forced to make a decision, Iverna. You can’t cast Me out. This thing isn’t demonic – it’s just that you have to find out where I am in it. And as soon as you do, I will lift that cloud and release My glory.”

How desperately we want the glory of the Lord to be upon us! I pray for it. We all do – don’t you? “Oh Lord, show Your glory. Let the world see You through me. Don’t let Your glory be hidden.” We desperately want that! But that “trouble” thing that hangs over us – is divinely planted – and you can’t move it until you make the choice! Fruit or failure.

King James says (of my text in verse 13) – which you undoubtedly have read in passing – at least many of you: “*He causeth it [the cloud] to come whether for correction or for His land or for mercy!*” (Oh God, give them ears to hear this.)

I was just casually reading the Scriptures, Church, when the Lord brought my focus to this verse. You know what that is like – this truth simply leapt out at me! The verse virtually leapt off the page! It was soooooo... You know... I’ve read Job so many times before – I’ve written a book on it (Advancing in the Prophetic – available at www.iverna.org). But this one verse just went ::zzzzzing:: to me, afresh and anew! And now He has allowed me to bring it to you today. Hallelujah!

If the truth was known, my dilemma when I read Job (and probably your own puzzle as well) is this: “Is there *trouble* for believers ***even after Calvary and Resurrection and Ascension?***” That’s my quandary. Does – or should – *trouble* exist in the life of believers? When I’m standing in the midst of the cloud that I want to get rid of, I tell Him that Jesus already went through everything – on my behalf! He bore the stripes on His body for my sicknesses (Isa.53:4,5). He died so that all my diseases and pains might be taken to Calvary – and nailed to His cross – that ALL sin – and all my sin – might be totally eradicated on Calvary! (see Col.1:20-23; 2:14,15; Eph.2:14-16).

Is that true or false? That is true! Then, why is it we’ve got pain or disease or *trouble*? That’s what I want us to learn here in Job. And that’s what this verse reveals: the reason is one of three things.

Do you have a mind that can hold that thought and then come back to it in a moment? I want to turn for just a minute to the New Testament and discover a little input of information from there. We need to see this: in Acts 14:21 and 22 it says: “*When they [Paul and his associates] had preached the Gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that **through much tribulation** we must enter into the Kingdom of God*” (emphasis added).

So, the stories in the Book of Acts came *after Calvary* – after His blood was shed on the cross for all sin. This story of Paul’s (and the verse highlighted above) was *after* Jesus’ mighty Resurrection and *after* His Ascension back into Heaven when He was seated at the right hand of the Father, and is even now

interceding for us (Rom.8:34; Eph.1:20; Heb.7:25; 9:24). “*My little children, these things write I unto you that you sin not, but if any man sin... I’m your “Advocate with the Father. I’m Jesus Christ, the Righteous!”* (1Jn.2:1).

We love to sing this song: “Jesus paid it all!” And He did. “All to Him I owe!” You cannot pay for your sins! There’s no way! We needed His righteous life to be a substitute for us (2Cor.5:21; Phil.3:9). “Well then, Iverna, what are you saying here that I have to learn?”

What I’m saying to us, to all of us, is – **everything that touches our lives is allowed by God** – or He’s not God. Everything that touches your life is *allowed* or sent by God – **or He’s not God!** We cannot sing: “You are Lord! You are Lord! You have risen from the dead and You are Lord.” “You are Lord supreme. You are King! You are Majesty! I worship *You!*” We cannot honestly sing any of that and mean it if we don’t understand **the Sovereignty** of those statements! He is Lord!

Then, why does He allow us... why is it that it’s “*through much tribulation*” that I have to walk in order to *claim the Kingdom* that I so believe in? Because the Kingdom is not made up of wimps! (It would have been in the Bible if they’d have known that word! ☺) (See Mt.11:12 and Lk.16:16).

“*Be ye strong*” therefore (Eph 6:10; Josh.1:9), “...understanding what the will of God is” (Eph.5:15-17). That’s what the Good Book says.

Now in this one verse, Job 37:13, **God’s purpose is clearly identified:** “*For discipline*” (or correction) – that’s one reason. How are we going to figure out our situations? How do we successfully handle everything so that we can be fruitful in trouble and not failing? Do you want the answer to that? Well, listen:

Number 1 – **Deny** – not the situation – but **deny yourself the luxury of self-pity** – and **continue walking**. Are you aware of what circumstances exist when it’s the most difficult for you to praise the Lord? It’s when you’re going *through trouble*. That’s when you just have to force your mouth. Tell the truth. Because you’re really... The natural man of me – the person – my human self – really wants the self-pity! It really wants to cry out, “Ohh-hhh-hhh God!” But the cloud still remains. Getting God to “feel your pain” does not move the cloud. ☺

But when I worship and praise Him, not because I *feel* like it, but because I recognize Who He is! I can go right through that cloud with my worship. It doesn’t necessarily dispel the darkness – because there’s a set time for that.

Have you never read The Book? In Ecclesiastes, there’s a time for this and a time for that and for the other thing too (chapter 3). Some of those times, I don’t want! ☺ But there is a set time. That’s why there are *suddenlies*. ☺ When the heavenly alarm goes off – “Oh! It’s time to move Iverna’s cloud.” It goes off – the angels come down – “It’s time to move her cloud.” And God says, “Alright my child – let’s rise higher.”

In the meantime, all my sweating and fasting and commanding and demanding and all the other things I could mention – haven’t done a thing to make my *trouble* go away! Because there’s a time set for when it goes! And that time is when I make the decision: “I will be fruitful in this – in this – IN THIS! Say it, Church. In this situation! In my trouble! I will be fruitful! That *choice* is recorded then in Heaven, when you say it and mean it.

But I meet people, far too often, who are so bitter at God over their adverse circumstances. “Well, if He’s the Almighty, He could’ve kept the car on the road.” “If He’s the Almighty, He could have prevented this.” My answer to that is – DUH! Of course He *could* have! But He didn’t!

Now, can we take another step? If you truly serve Him and recognize His awesomeness and His greatness and yet some cloud has come into your life and is not leaving – can you also recognize there’s a divine purpose in it – for you?

So, the number one step we need to take is “**Deny yourself the luxury of self-pity and continue walking.**” Here’s the verse for that: Matthew 16:24: “*Then said Jesus to His disciples, ‘If any man will come after Me – let him deny himself...*’” That’s what you do when you praise Him even when you don’t feel like it. That’s what you do when someone comes along speaking all the negatives and you *want* to join their chorus, but you say, “Oh, God is good – all the time!” “...*deny himself, pick up his cross – and follow Me!*”

Step number 2 – Discover what God is saying and doing – and why – and then respond accordingly.

I think it’s beautiful of Him to make it so absolutely clear – why He does what He does: “*For discipline...*” (37:13). If I recognize that I’m going through what I’m going through because He’s after something in me – to discipline it – how do I handle that? Shall I go to a close friend who surely will suggest: “Oh no, there’s nothing wrong in your life. I wish I was as good a Christian as you are! I don’t see how God could be *disciplining* you. Wow... that just couldn’t be!” ☺ That may make you feel a little better but it won’t help you. Actually, it just sticks your feet deeper in the mud! ☺

The first thing we need to do if we think – or if we believe – that God is doing this for the sake of bringing *discipline* to us – is to confess, repent, and change our thoughts. *Repent* means to change your mind, or turn all the way around and go in the opposite direction. So, stop speaking negatively. Change your attitude. Change your action. Change whatever needs to be changed in you, or in your life, or in your relationships with other people. And don’t spend the next five years of your life *pouting!* Are you familiar with that word? It’s pretty old, but we still do it! ☺

I’m sure you’ve heard something like this nasally whine: “It makes me so mad! I don’t know why I have to go through it. I look at Jane – she doesn’t have to go through anything. She’s got life on a string!” ☺ That’s a whine – and the pout is what we’re doing with our lower lip and the scowly expression in our eyebrows! ☺ We whine and pout all at the same time. And the Lord simply says, “You are digging one grand hole for yourself – under the cloud!” ☺

If I recognize nothing in me, however, that needs correction – and if the Holy Spirit reveals no problem in me – then I have to go to the second reason listed in our verse. He said it’s for discipline (or correction) or “*for grace*” for His land.

One of the problems with forgetting how much grace He is already sharing – is that we just take it (and Him) for granted. Picture this: if God withdrew His Blessing and Presence from every life who denies His existence, what would it be like? We would be living close to hell!

Now, if that got through to you.... (Did it? Get through to you? ☺) Therefore – *that* truth (how much of His grace we already enjoy) ought to be a major part of the measure of our testimony. Rather than dangle unbelievers over hell because of their sinful ways and deeds, saying something like: “If you don’t change this and that and the other thing about your life, God’s going to...” – what we ought to do is say: “Oh! How God has blessed you! It’s His grace!”

It takes – it *seemingly* takes – an unbeliever without eyes, like Ray Charles, to sit down at a piano and remind us how much God has blessed this land! Recently, on a Patriotic broadcast, I heard him sing with such deep feeling. And we all joined him with great gusto: “America! America!” And then the lyrics proclaim: “You have shed Your grace...” When that lyric came up on the television screen, I thought “*I forgot to put that in the past tense!*” (Did you get that one? Think it through! Oh, good for you, you are getting this!) Because of His *grace* ... already poured out in abundance...

Oh, yes! I want Him to continue to shed His grace on me and my children and theirs and all the rest of it – but *He already has!* “God! You have shed Your grace! You have poured it out on us so liberally! And we’re under this cloud now because of Your grace – because **if You remove the cloud, You remove Your dealings!**” And I do not want Him to remove His hand from my life!

Step number 3 for us then is to: **Determine to remain faithful.** I just have to sing another one – it is so true! “Through it all – through it all – I’ve learned to trust in Jesus, I’ve learned...” “I’ve *learned*...” “I’ve **learned**...” It wasn’t imparted to me! If I thought you were old enough, I would sing an even older hymn: “Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him! How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er! Jesus, Jesus! Precious Jesus!” Do you remember how it ends? “Oh, for *grace*...” Grace! Oh – He said – “*for grace*.” The cloud is there “for grace!” Because you can’t learn to trust Him and I can’t learn to trust Him – if we only walk along a smooth path!

“If I never had a problem, I wouldn’t know that God could solve them... Through it all...” Make a determined statement to yourself: “**I’m going through, Jesus – with You!**” How many remember this other old song? “I’ll pay the price – whatever others do. I’ll take the way with the Lord’s anointed *few*...”?”

I’m going through this thing! This cloud. I want to come through to the glory! The glory is on the other side of the darkness! **Determine to remain faithful – through it all.**

Remember now, the third reason for His specific intervention in our lives, according to our text, is “*For extravagant love*” – or, “*for mercy*.” The verse says, “*For correction, for grace, or for extravagant love.*” God has shed His grace because He loves His people. And that is an extravagant love we humans have such a difficult time understanding or extending to others.

So, let’s review: first, we deny ourselves. Then we discover which of the three reasons in the list is the one for what *we’re* going through. And finally we determine to finish our course.

“*Wherefore let them that suffer,*” Peter said, “*according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator.*” Doesn’t that preach this whole sermon in one breath? That’s 1 Peter 4:19.

The same verse in The Message reads like this: “*So, if you find life difficult, because you’re doing what God said...*” That’s not correction, is it? You’re doing what God said. “*...take it in stride,*” Peter says, “*trust Him. He knows what he’s doing! And,*” he goes on, “*...He’ll keep on doing it!*” ☺

Oh! Thank God I can not change Him! Believe me; I’ve tried – “in Jesus’ Name!” ☺ But He is Who He is. And He is that – all the time! Faithful and good and filled with all grace and mercy and extravagant love which He abundantly and without measure pours out on His children!

Now, turn to Romans 8 and we’ll read a few verses before I close. (Aren’t you proud of me? I usually preach longer ☺). Romans 8:26 through 28. “*Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God’s Spirit is right alongside helping us along....*”

Have you ever gone to bed at night and just prayed (or complained or moaned to Him): “I give up! I’m not going through this anymore!” And then when you get up the next morning, you’ve a new song on your heart? “Praise You, Lord! You are so good to me, O Lord!” What has happened? The Holy Spirit came in. He took you at your word. You gave up! ☺

Or, have you ever started to pray a negative: “God, I’m so tired of this... Dear God, if one more person...” and TONGUES just burst forth? It’s the Holy Ghost praying what ought to be being said! That’s what Paul is saying here in Romans 8.

“If we don’t know how or what to pray, it doesn’t matter. This is Scripture – it’s from The Message. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans...” Oh! How thankful I am for that! Truly. I am so grateful when He comes like that! When I’ve prayed through all my sentences, all my vocabulary, and something inside me still needs deliverance, and the Holy Spirit *births* that thing! Tongues come so forcefully! And I don’t interpret it – I just trust it!

Verse 27: *“He knows us far better than we know ourselves; He knows our pregnant condition... That’s why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good...”* Go on to verse 35: *“Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ...? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even”* – Oh! I love this! *“...not even the worst sins in Scripture.”*

Verse 38 continues: *“I’m absolutely convinced...”* – oh, you know the King James language for this: *“for I am persuaded”* – *“that nothing, – nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, nothing today or nothing tomorrow, nothing that’s high or nothing that’s low... absolutely nothing can get between us and God’s love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us!”*

Oh! Whoa! Hallelujah! Church, we win! We’re going to come out of these things **FRUITFUL!** And ready for the glory of God to be demonstrated within us! It’s our choice to agree with His will and His way and to be fruitful – or fail – in the process.

Here’s my benediction. If you want the benediction, reach out for it – from Him. From 2 Corinthians 1, verse 2 – first the King James and then The Message. *“Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

The Message says, *“May all the gifts and benefits that come from God our Father and the Master, Jesus Christ, be yours!”* And to that I say, “Amen! and Amen!”