

Adversity



A Christ-centered approach to hardship

What is it?
Why does it come?
How are we to handle it?
What is the “fruit” of adversity?

Rebecca Lusignolo-McGlone

Adversity; A Christ-centered approach to hardship

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Dedication:

This work is dedicated to my Lord and my God...Jesus Christ.
Thank You for taking my hand and walking me through the valley of adversity.

Introduction

The Holy Spirit dropped the thought in my heart to write about adversity [in *even more* detail than I usually do!]. Since that time, I've been searching scriptures to answer the questions the Lord put on my heart. Meanwhile, the Lord has so graciously given me *even more opportunities* to learn from experience just what Adversity is all about !

So, let's take a look at what adversity is, the various reasons why adversity is allowed into our lives, what we should do in response to it and examine the "fruit" of adversity...besides feeling like a wrung out dish rag!

May He bless us through His Word.

Becky

Adversity

- What is it?
- Why does it come?
- What do we (as followers of Christ) do about it?
- What is the fruit of adversity?

What exactly is adversity? We all know when we're facing it, but how do you describe it? How does God's Word describe it? The Old Testament uses a number of Hebrew words that are all translated as adversity, as does the New Testament. Let's dig deep and uncover the essence of "adversity".

Hebrew:

Tsar : narrow—a tight place, a pebble, anguish, distress, strait or tribulation.

Rah : affliction, evil, bad, distress, exceedingly great grief, heavy, hurtful, sorrow.

Tsawlal: hovering over to shade, dark, heaviness

Tsela: halting, limping, to fall

Greek:

Kakoucheo: suffer adversity, torment.

Pathema: something *undergone*, that is, *hardship* or *pain*; subjectively an *emotion* or *influence*: - affection, affliction, motion, suffering.

In light of God's Word, we can say that adversity is a feeling of being hemmed in, trapped or in a tight place. It causes sorrow. It is a thick cloud of heaviness that hovers over us. It means to suffer. Picture being "pinned down" and abused. Anguish, exceedingly great grief. Or — it can be a "pebble in your shoe", nothing major yet a constant source of irritation. Having no control over your life.

Whew... No wonder we spend so much time trying hard to avoid it! Who would sign up for that package? If you are a follower of Christ — you did.* *"For to you (Christ's followers) it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" or "All who desire to live godly in Christ will suffer."* [Philippians 1:29 NASB 2 Timothy 3:12]

In one form or another, each of us will go through adversity at some point in our lives. No control — a tight place — small irritations that are endless — pinned down by circumstances — limping from the pain of it all (literally or figuratively) . Have you ever been there? Are you there now? Maybe you know someone who is walking through an unbearably fiery circumstance. Hear our Lord's Word to them, *and you... I sought the LORD and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. The LORD is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me? Psalm 34:4 NASB and Psalm 118:6 NLT*

Now that we have a clear picture of what adversity is...next we'll take a look at why we have to deal with it in the first place. After all, haven't many of us been taught that Christ died and rose again to bring us "happiness, peace and joy"? Shouldn't we have enough faith to ward off all of our trials?

**I have no desire to teach theology or change your present theology on the matter of trials, etc. but I hope to embed into your heart the absolute Truth and trustworthiness of the Word of God. It is truer than any preconceived idea we may have of what it means to be a victorious follower of Christ.*

*Father,
Give me eyes to see and ears to hear what You want to teach me.
Remove the lens of my preconceived ideas of what "victory in Jesus" looks like. I am more than a conqueror through Christ Jesus. Trials are a part of life, cause me to rise up from the ashes depression and walk by faith in You.
In Jesus name, I pray. Amen (so be it).*

Why Do We Face Adversity?

His disciples asked Him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, It was not that this man or his parents sinned, but he was born blind in order that the workings of God should be manifested (displayed and illustrated) in him.

John 9:2-3 (Amplified Bible)

Why do we, as followers of Christ, face adversity? The simplistic answer is, due to sin, life itself is prone to unfairness and hardship. As long as we are alive in this body we will face adversity of one kind or another. What I want to sift through is the complex and deeply personal answer...answers to questions like these: Why did my child die? Why do I have cancer? Why did my spouse lose their job? Why did my best friend die? Why did my marriage fall apart? Why can't I have children? Why are my finances in shambles? Why is life so challenging, for *me*...for *my* children...for *my* family? Having faced my own set of challenges, (for much longer and more intensely than I ever would have imagined!) I have come up with a list of reasons that are not only born out in my experience but Biblical as well. After all, if it doesn't pass *that* test, of what value is it?

Why do we face adversity?

- To grow us up in the faith...
- To build endurance in us...
- To mature us...
- To teach us humility...
- To bring us to the end of ourselves, our own strength and our own plans...
- So that we may learn dependence on God...
- To test us...
- To reveal our hearts *to us*...
- To stretch us...
- To harden us to difficulties...
- To keep us from pride...
- To increase our faith...

- To be used as a living example for others benefit...
- As a means of examining our hidden motives...
- To equip us for use in ministry...
- To bring glory to God...
- To teach us to trust our Father regardless of circumstances...
- *Sometimes* adversity is a natural consequence of wrong choices...
- Last of all...there will be that rare occasion when THERE IS NO GOOD ANSWER this side of heaven...it's at that moment we must make the deliberate choice to trust our Father. Trust Him because He has proven Himself faithful to us even to the point of giving His Son's life for us.

Charles Stanley said this concerning hard times or suffering, "*Brokenness is God's requirement for maximum usefulness.*" It's through our brokenness that we come to know *by experience* that God's grace is sufficient to meet our every need. We can read books on the subject from now until the cows come home, but there is nothing like walking THROUGH the valley of suffering to know the Shepherd's intimate care and guidance first hand. We are then able to extend that adversity-born sense of compassion and empathy to others.

*Father, Your Word tells me to "count it all joy" when I go through difficulties of any kind because of what it produces in me. I admit that I don't really like the sound of that or understand how that's possible. Enable me to do what You've called me to do. Thank You for entrusting me with these challenges. Make my heart fertile soil for Your Word to grow deep, strong roots so that when the winds of pain and adversity blow, I will be able to stand strong in You. Strengthen me Lord, encourage my spirit to trust You no matter what my eyes see. I love You so much! I confess my total dependence on You.
In the precious name of Jesus I ask these things,
Amen (so be it)*

What do we DO with Adversity?

Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

James 1:2-4 The Message (a paraphrase)

But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed [with no defects], lacking in nothing.

James 1:4 AMP

Wait and hope for and expect the Lord; be brave and of good courage and let your heart be stout and enduring. Yes, wait for and hope for and expect the Lord.

Psalms 27:14 AMP

What do we do with hard times? Certainly the easiest and most tempting thing to do is feel sorry for our self and run for the door...any door! But wait, before you get those track shoes on and race to the nearest "friend" with a listening ear — let's talk to the Father for a moment. Ask Him what He wants you to do. What does his Word have to say about your circumstance? Can't find a verse? I like to start with part of Psalm 139. Here it is in two versions:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. Psalm 139: 23-24 NLT

AND

Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; Cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I'm about; See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong then guide me on the road to eternal life. Psalm 139: 23-24 The Message (a paraphrase)

We need Lord's perspective on our trials — Do you have an area of your life that needs dealt with? Has He put a finger on a hot spot, an area of sin? Once that question's been dealt with then you're ready for the biggie — be prepared to surrender your will to the Father's.

Ooooh. It may sting just to read the words. But do it anyway. Read them again. Surrender — your — will — to — The — Father.

Beloved, He will help you, He will not fail you, He will take care of you, He will walk you through the valley, He is trustworthy, He is faithful. If He has allowed this trial into your life, you can bank on the fact that he has a reason for having done so. Trust Him with your pain. Trust that He has a plan [Jeremiah 29:11].

He [Jesus} fell on His face and prayed, saying "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me (the cup of God's wrath and judgment of sin); yet not My will, but as Thou wilt." Matthew 26:39

Let those who suffer according to the will of God, entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. 1 Peter 4:19

What do we do with adversity? Seek God's perspective on our trial and then freely submit our will to the Father's.

*Father,
Help me! How do You see my circumstances? I know that You cause all things to work out for my good and Your glory — but I can't see it right now. If I have an area of my heart that has been withheld from You — reveal it Lord. Enable me to fully surrender to You. Grant me wisdom to walk through this trial without bitterness, and with the assurance that my steps are being directed by You. Thank You, Father. I freely surrender my will to Yours. In the mighty name of Jesus I ask theses things.
Amen*

What is the Fruit of Adversity?

So that [the genuineness] of your faith may be tested, [your faith] which is infinitely more precious than the perishable gold which is tested and purified by fire. [This proving of your faith is intended] to rebound to [your] praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) is revealed.

1Peter 1 :6-8 AMP

*...to be **conformed** to the likeness (image) of his Son...*

Romans 8:29b AMP

Greek definitions:

CONFORMED: *jointly formed, similar:* - conformed to, fashioned like unto.

IMAGE: The likeness... resemblance...representation...profile

An elderly gentleman was given an antique, gold pocket watch. Being a bit battered and worn from the years of use, it didn't much resemble the fine gold piece it actually was.

Knowing this, the man got out an old, scratchy rag and began buffing the golden watch. Working back and forth and then buffing in circles over and over again. Every now and then he would stop, examine the watch and then be right back at it. Rubbing and buffing — until at last, the old man held up the gold pocket watch and looked — *there it was* — his own reflection looking back at him. Crisp and defined — like peering into a mirror. "Beautiful!" the old man said, "Just *beautiful*."

You and I , Beloved, are like that gold pocket watch. Our Father God uses adversity as friction, an opposing force, in our lives. He buffs here and rubs there. Sometimes it's painful... sometimes it's excruciating... sometimes

it feels like steel wool rubbing against our heart. But always, always it's a *controlled* process. Our Father either causes or allows these difficulties for a purpose, Beloved. He desires us to reflect *His* image. Adversity, if handled properly, will always cause us to be conformed into the likeness of Jesus, our Lord.

In addition, you'll grow in such a way that others may look at you and say; "Whatever they have....I want it." Your season of adversity can *and will* be used by the Lord to minister to others going through their own time of testing. They will see in you the very life of this Christ that you proclaim..."a living epistle (letter) read of all men" 2 *Corinthians* 3:2

You see, if your relationship with God is only powerful enough to carry you through sunny days and overflowing bank accounts, it cannot *and will not* be a beacon of hope to a hopeless and hurting world. To show others Christ's sufficiency, you must — of necessity — at times be in a position of desperate need yourself.

Last of all, your pliability in the hands of our Lord, as you walk through the valley of testing is in itself a sort of vindication by God. "*When a man's ways please the Lord, He causes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*" Proverbs 16:7 As you yield to the Lord's pruning process, He makes even your enemies be at peace with you. Now that's some fruit I can get use to!

[But what of that?] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time (this present life) are not worth being compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us and in us and for us and conferred on us! Roman's 8:17-19 AMP

Father,

Make me pliable in Your hands. Conformed me to Your likeness. Mold me and form me, so that I'll reflect the very image of Your Son, Jesus . I know You won't allow my pain and time of adversity to be wasted. Use it to change me, Lord. Cause others to see You in me and then cry out for You — the only One Who can really help. I love You. Thank You for Your mercy on my life. In Jesus' name, Amen

* * * * *

It is my hope that the Lord has used this study on Adversity to encourage you, to cause you to seek His perspective on your time of testing and most of all...to trust Him with your pain. Beloved, He is in absolute control of all things...not most or some or quite a few...but, ALL things. He is trustworthy to the point of spilling His own blood for you. He will see you through to the other side of whatever you're facing. Meanwhile — allow Him to produce good "fruit" in you.

Becky < > <

*What I always feared has happened to me. What I
dreaded has come true.
Job 3:25 NLT*

*I sought the Lord and He heard me and delivered
me from all my fears.
Psalm 34:4*

NOT AGAIN!
It can't be —
The very thing that caused such fear,
Once again...is here

What do I do, Lord?
How do I walk?
Grant me strength, Father
That I may learn to lean on You —
My Rock

Build endurance in me, Father
Infuse me with Your patience

Enable me, Lord —
To focus on eternity
And cause me to ever see
Your Sovereignty.

Confident You are near,
May I — No longer fear
May I — no longer dread
Whatever, may lay ahead

Come what may, Father
Of this I am sure —
You hold my life,
Ever secure

*Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you
become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall
again praise Him for the help of His presence. Psalm
42:5 NASB*

Previous work by Becky Lusignolo-McGlone includes:

Devotions for Difficult Days: Thoughts for those with a heavy heart, by Lulu Publishing at lulu.com

Work contributed to by Becky Lusignolo-McGone:

365 Daily Devotions for Single Moms, ISBN 978-1-60260-136-0, by Barbour Publishing, release date of February, 2008

Adversity

By Rebecca Lusignolo-McGlone



“Yet I could not say, ‘Take Thy plague from me,’
but only,
‘Let me be purified, not consumed,’”
John Wesley