

Insights into Fullness of Life in Christ

7. The Hidden Blessing of Adversity - God's purposes in Adversity.

Can the adversities in our life be considered an adventure or are they just an annoyance.? What part does God play in these things and can adversity lead to blessing? That is the essence of this study.

Writing on the subject of adversity is quite a daunting task. However, it relates closely to the major theme of this series of studies of living in the fullness of life and spirit that God intended. As the Bible clearly teaches that adversity is a major precursor of that life, we need to understand how it appears to work in relation to the teachings of scripture and the workings of God. However, as a man who has lived and experienced some degree of adversity (although very limited compared with some) I believe I can offer some thoughts on how it all works, even though much will remain in the realm of mystery of how God deals with His special saints, in the process of them becoming like Jesus.

In the first six studies, we have introduced many of the basic aspects of Christianity, particularly for believers who already know something of the faith. Because of the ground work laid in the first six studies it is now time to move on to look at the all important issue of adversity and how it fits with the way God works to mature our lives in Him.

Someone once wrote that the Christian life is not all sweetness and light. That is evidenced from even a cursory study of scripture and from the experience of life. Most saints in scripture suffered during Gods dealings with them, because in order to do His will they had to conform to His ways, otherwise there was no guidance or power to do His will. It is a way of God that He permits and allows suffering of His people in order that they be prepared for service. Everything in Christianity is based on the cross. Without it we would not have a faith, for our walk is based on our personal experience of the cross.

Joseph Caryl, a Puritan who lived in the 17th century once wrote in the same vein. *"God takes the most eminent and choicest of His servants for the choicest and most eminent afflictions. They who have received most grace from God are able to bear most afflictions from God. Affliction does not hit the saint by chance, but by direction. God does not draw His bow at a venture. Every one of His arrows goes upon a special errand and touches no breast but his against whom it is sent. It is not only the grace, but the glory of a believer when we can stand and take affliction quietly."* And as the Angel in Revelation said, reflecting Jesus, *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (Rev.3:19).* Suffering, chastening, trouble, bad times, affliction, persecution, grief and tribulation are an inherent part of the Christian life, God using such means to model His saints into what He wants them to be.

This study is spread over two full units. Unit 7 will introduce the subject, explaining how God often hides His blessing in the adversities of life. Unit 8 will look at Adversity and its partnerships with other parts of the Christian life, such as our attitudes, our priorities, and the effect of law, grace and faith in our lives.

Let's move into the study. *As always, the Spirit of God is your teacher.*

No	Thematic point	Developmental Point	Illustrations and linkages
1	Basic premises	<p>Before we start on the study itself, we need to mention that there are some basic premises underpinning this study.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One is that because mankind is basically sinful, <u>there is plenty of trouble and strife available in the world</u> for God to use as afflictions and sufferings to bring or allow adversity into our lives. 2. The second is that <u>because God is sovereign and rules over the whole world, He is able to utilize whatever might be going on</u> around us to allow the adversity and suffering. He uses it to change us and bring about His will in our lives. 3. Thirdly, Biblical principle indicates that <u>God uses bad or evil to bring about good.</u> 4. Fourth, there are <u>no circumstances where we can accuse God of hurting us for no reason.</u> He is a God of love, but sometimes we need the chastisement of His tough love and sometimes we need to be reminded of any sin, or that He wants us to learn to act in more godly ways. 	<p><i>However, just in case God might appear to be an ogre who only brings trouble, let it also be known that God also brings good to all men and protects and keeps them from a wide range of otherwise harmful events – and in His own time, delivers His own from trouble.</i></p> <p><i>To stay outside of God’s family of believers is to invite trouble that will ultimately be outside of anyone’s ability to control.</i></p>
2	How do you view and handle the adversities that come to you in your life?	<p>Most of us consider them a nuisance, something that shouldn’t have happened to us, or shouldn’t be happening to us. We don’t like them at all, at least not until we realize something of how God uses adversity.</p> <p>Common adversities include ill-health, financial loss, violence of both physical and verbal types, loss of loved ones, unemployment, disunity and various traumas such as accidents or just plain misfortune. We almost never see such things as positive, but always as something bad, calling it a set back, bad luck, misfortune, or if the adversity is really difficult, we would call it a disaster, calamity of catastrophe, as indeed they can be.</p>	<p><i>So why are adversities such a common occurrence in life? Why do they happen and how should we view them?</i></p> <p><i>I am addressing believers who do not think God has any right to bring difficulty to them, but that God should only bless them. The experience of life and scripture indicates otherwise.</i></p>
3	We need to know that God both allows and initiates adversity in our lives. The Bible says so!	<p>To some, that might seem a strange thing to say. However, this study will establish from the Bible that God (as well as the good He does) also initiates a whole range of negatives culminating in woe and adversity - all for His own purposes, which normally can be shown to be of ultimate benefit to mankind and for the glory of God.</p> <p>It does seem from what I hear people say, that they cannot see how God could actually initiate difficulty to come to us. They will allow that God will allow things to happen but not that He will cause it.</p>	<p><i>However, scripture does record both forms of trouble coming to believers. Of particular importance are those where God actually initiated the trouble brought against His own believing people.</i></p>

<p>4</p>	<p>God tells us through the writings of the prophets that God Himself appoints adversity and that it ultimately comes from God.</p>	<p>First, Solomon tells us that prosperity and adversity come from God.</p> <p><i>"In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, so that man can find out nothing that will come after him. <u>Eccl. 7:14 (NKJV)</u></i></p> <p>Second, Jeremiah tells us that both woe and well-being proceed from God</p> <p><i>"Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that woe and well-being proceed? <u>Lam. 3:38 (NKJV)</u></i></p> <p>Third, Job, one of the greatest sufferers of all time, told his wife that God brings adversity.</p> <p><i>"But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. <u>Job 2:10 (NKJV)</u></i></p> <p>Fourth, God Himself, through Isaiah tells us he created calamity.</p> <p><i>"I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things." <u>Isa. 45:7 (NKJV)</u></i></p> <p>Isaiah 45:7 is a very important verse. However, you have to go the King James version to find out why.</p>	<p><i>In this verse God says that He makes peace and creates evil. (KJV) Yes the King James version says that God creates evil. These words are the words of God..</i></p> <p><i>Different versions of scripture use different words for evil. It comes from the Hebrew word "ra" meaning adversity and calamity.</i></p> <p>So, God has appointed both adversity and prosperity in this world, likewise woe and well-being, along with peace and calamity.</p> <p>So we should not be surprised if all these come to us in life.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>God actually does a whole range of things that would surprise many people. These include using the sins & evil of some people to bring about His will in the lives of His people.</p>	<p>There are examples in scripture where God both plans and uses evil for His own glory and His own purposes – to bring ultimate good from evil – even though we might not fully understand why He does this. Firstly, in the Old Testament.</p> <p>Exodus 4:11. <i>God says that He makes the dumb, the deaf, the seeing and the blind.</i> That is a most interesting statement in view of the way we sometimes view disability. So it seems that God says that this comes from Him.</p> <p>Jeremiah 43:10 <i>God said that the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar was His servant.</i> God used King Nebuchadnezzar to come against His own people because their sin against Him.</p> <p>Isaiah 10:5. <i>God called the evil Assyrians, "the rod of My anger".</i> God used Israel's enemies to come against His own people because their sin against Him.</p> <p>Joel 1:4 and 2:25. <i>God called the locusts etc "My great army which I sent among you".</i> God uses</p>	

	<p>In the New Testament.</p>	<p>His whole creation to achieve His purposes and in this case it was locusts.</p> <p>Genesis 50:20. God MEANT evil to bring about good. This was after Joseph had suffered over many years. Joseph acknowledged that his own brothers had meant evil against him but God had intended it for good. Joseph suffered the evil, apparently with his eyes on God, because God later used and prospered him.</p> <p>Acts 2:22-23. Peter said that Jesus was delivered (unto the cross) by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. This means that God had made the crucifixion His intended purpose for Jesus, in order to make salvation possible for the whole world.</p> <p>Acts 4:27-28. When believers were praying after Jesus death, they acknowledged that Herod and Pilate only did what God had decided to permit them to do beforehand.</p> <p>John 19:11. Jesus said to Pilate that he could only have the power over Him that was given from above. So again, this makes it clear that the Father intended the cross. (If there were two powers, Jesus would surely have said – power from below. Jesus only saw one power – and that was His)</p> <p>John 18:11. Jesus said to Peter in the garden when he was being arrested, that it was the Father’s cup that He had to drink. Would not he have said Satan’s cup if He was acknowledging two powers? This is an example of how Satan’s ability to do anything is limited by God, to perform the purposes of God according to the will of God.</p> <p><i>From these examples we can see that God indeed does cause and use what we might see as evil, difficulty and trauma for His own ultimate good.</i></p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Why does adversity happen and from where does it initiate?</p> <p>1 – From the sinful heart of man.</p>	<p>It is fairly obvious that in the light of these scriptures that Satan does have some part to play in how some adversity comes to people in this world. There is another aspect of this. We will deal with that soon. But the first one is that evil and evil acts towards others, simply come out of the heart of man because of his sinful nature, every man being naturally born into sin, out of his forefather Adam. The tyrants and despots of history, such as Hitler have demonstrated such evil. But, (although at a lesser level) so do normal unregenerate people when they act out of self interest instead of looking to the needs of others. All too frequently, believers also act in ways that harm others, often with good intent, but because their own human spirit within does not overrule the flesh, we get evil operating that brings adversity to others. So man himself, out of the evil of his own heart can cause varying degrees of woe and adversity.</p> <p>So that is where normal every day adversity probably comes from – and there is only one antidote to that – to know Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour and Lord – and to commit to following Him daily – learning of Him as we go.</p>

	<p>2- Because Satan is God's convenient servant</p>	<p>And then there is another very important aspect of this, that the enemy of God, called Satan, the Adversary and lots of other names can bring extreme adversity to human life. In many of the cases mentioned above, Satan was used by God for His own purposes, even though Satan might have appeared to be the perpetrator.</p> <p>The story of Job is the classical scriptural example. Satan, it is said, incited God against Job and for His own purposes God allowed Satan limited access to Job's life. As a consequence, Job and his family suffered - and Job's suffering was extreme - but again, this was allowed by God for His purposes - of teaching Job about his pride and that his sufficiency would only be found in God. (Job 40:9-14)</p> <p>People always have a choice between good and evil and this pattern was first seen in the garden of Eden when Satan deceived Eve into sin. Adam then disobeyed God and sinned, thus causing the Fall of man into sin. <i>(that is why Jesus had to come 4000 years later, to pay the penalty for that sin)</i></p> <p>Satan's incitement of God towards Job, would seem to be just one example of similar incitements by Satan, over the history of the world, that gives insights as to why thousands of evil dictators have done unimaginable things to their fellow man. No doubt there was the sin in them of an unregenerate heart, but then Satan needs little encouragement to exploit that weakness and turn it into extreme adversity in the world. These are difficult things but we must face them in the light of the Word of God.</p> <p>Norman Grubb wrote on this issue in his book Yes I Am. >>></p>	<p><i>"This is our first evidence, (referring to Adam and Eve) which appears later all through scripture and experience, that Satan, though the enemy, is in fact God's convenient agent, always doing precisely what God determines he should do. That makes a great difference in our attitude toward and our handling of Satan, and of all the situations and people by whom he is operating; for we then start not negatively - looking at his lying, bluffing appearance as independent power - but positively, by always recognizing that he is merely God's servant, unwittingly fulfilling God's purposed will in his activities. (Grubb - Yes I Am P 26)</i></p> <p>If all this is too hard to swallow, then go back over the verses in this study and consider them in the light of this idea. Later in the study this opens the way up to some of the aspects of how we might deal with adversity in our lives.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Before we go any further, what do we mean when we talk about adversity?</p>	<p>Adversity is a general word used to describe the state of suffering, of persecution, of calamity, of chastening, of trouble, of torment, fear, tribulation, or the state of having evil or woe come upon us. Most adversity involves loss in some form or another - either through loss of freedom, physical or financial assets, income, or mental or physical state, or loss of relationship with someone, or any form of difficult or hard circumstance. <i>Looking at the frequency of the use of these words is enlightening.</i></p>	<p>The word ADVERSITY occurs in scripture as follows: KJV OT - 9 times NKJV OT - 20 times NIV OT - twice KJV NT - once NKJV NT - 0 NIV NT - 0</p>

	<p style="text-align: center;">----- Three types or causes of adversity. -----</p>	<p>The word woe, is a very similar word to adversity, both words meaning a state of misfortune, having problems, or difficult or hard circumstances to contend with.</p> <p>The words describing the forms of adversity and woe are also mentioned a large number of times. Calamity was a word frequently used, being mentioned 46 times and trouble is used 122 times in the OT. However, the word evil top scores with 346 mentions in the OT and 108 in the NT. >>>></p> <p>So there is a lot of adversity, woe, chastening suffering, persecution, calamity, trouble, torment, fear, or tribulation and affliction in the scriptural record. One of the purposes of this study is to look and see why these things are so frequent in the scriptures and their importance.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>We can find ourselves in adversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. By virtue of our own foolish actions or attitudes. B. Because we are subject to the wrath, persecution or evil of others. C. Because God has allowed or brought us into some form of adversity, (as the book of Hebrews says) for chastening or discipline by our Father God – because as Hebrews says, "it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness, a result of pursuing our continuing sanctification and realizing the grace of God. 	<p><i>The word WOE occurs in scripture as follows:</i></p> <p><i>KJV OT – 65 times NKJV OT – 69 times NIV OT - 58 times KJV NT - 33 times NKJV NT – 33 times NIV NT - 32 times</i></p> <p>-----</p> <p><i>It is important to realize the differences between these three causes of adversity, because the actions we need to take may vary with the cause. So each of these causes will be studied separately.</i></p>
<p>7 A</p>	<p>Simple adversity basically caused because we bring trouble on ourselves.</p>	<p>Some of the simpler adversity that comes our way is because of our own foolishness, either in our actions or attitudes. Breaking the laws of society can bring adversity, from very small things like running a red light (bringing danger or a fine) right up to major things like murder which will bring major penalties upon us such as a jail term. . Breaking natural laws like not eating right foods or drinking too much alcohol or smoking will ultimately result in serious health issues, even death. >>>>></p> <p>Also, acting inappropriately in relationships is a major way of bringing adversity into life. For example, anyone who has been divorced will tell you of the trauma of the break in relationship. One issue relating to this is important and that is whether we knowingly break the law that brings the adversity or whether we do it almost accidentally or unknowingly. Breaking the law deliberately of course exacerbates and compounds the sin, making it likely that</p>	<p><i>Take for example the receiving of a few speeding fines. Not nice! \$125 each time really hurts the hip pocket. But after having these penalties applied, we might learn not to speed and our lives are better off. It might have even helped us to live and not die on our roads. At a minimum we will have more money to enjoy</i></p>

		<p><i>"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you." (Luke 6:27-28)</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">>>>></p> <p>This example from the words of Jesus is just one example from from one of the many in scripture. Having and maintaining relationships is a major theme of scripture and considerable advice is provided throughout the whole Bible. Eg. Our relationship with God, marriage relationships, relationships with children, governments, within churches, with unbelievers and so on. Because of the length of the study I have limited this to just the one example above, as an encouragement to look for more.</p> <p>This verse sums it up well.</p> <p><i>" ...being reviled, we bless, being persecuted we endure it, being defamed, we entreat." (1 Cor 4:12)</i></p> <p><i>Here is the promise of God, given by Paul to Timothy</i></p> <p><i>" ...all who desire to lead a godly life in Christ will suffer persecution. (2 Tim 3:12)</i></p>	<p><i>A Personal example.</i></p> <p><i>About a year ago, two people in a particular semi-social setting in my life, were rude and indifferent to me – for no apparent reason. There was simply nothing I had done (to my awareness) to cause them to have that attitude towards me. When it happened I just forgave as the Lord says to forgive – but as it continued I began to apply all the advice in those two verses. Within 3 months their attitude had reversed – without me doing anything else at all. WOW!</i></p>
<p>7 C</p>	<p>Adversity allowed or initiated by God.</p>	<p>As a believer in God, and therefore believing in what the Bible says about these things, and as an observer of the human condition of my own and the lives of others, I believe that adversity, if viewed correctly can have and indeed normally will ultimately have a positive effect. Of course it is rarely possible to see the good in adversity as it happens. We are emotionally involved in our lives and will always be shocked or saddened or annoyed at this trauma that has just happened to us. Some time later we may well see that it was meant to be and had that difficult event not happened we would not have learnt what we did. Also, in the absence of murmuring and complaining which can come out of our mouths, we will learn much faster and attract lesser adversity. The children of Israel found it hard to learn the benefits of not complaining. Moreover, Jesus taught in Mark 7 that negatives that come out of our mouths actually defile us – Yes us! <i>(that teaching will be covered in unit 8 when additional things about adversity will be added)</i></p>	<p>It seems to me that <u>we can learn from adversity, if we take responsibility for what happens to us.</u> Not that we can ever get rid of all adversity, but I believe we can limit the damage (of viewing it the wrong way) by learning from the adversities that come our way. If we don't learn from them, we can really suffer long term effects and never really know something of the peace and prosperity in life that can be possible.</p>

		<p>I believe that the God of this universe has a purpose in allowing adversities to come our way. Dozens of scriptures in God’s Word and scores of examples, say such as this.</p> <p><i>“...if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongly...when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps: " who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth" who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.....” (1 Pet 2:19-24)</i></p> <p>We could make the following verse a prayer. It indicates Peter’s hope that we will be able to be glad in affliction.</p> <p><i>“Make us glad according to the days in which you have afflicted us, and the years in which we have seen evil.” (Ps 91:15)</i></p> <p>The primary purpose of this writing is to examine the principles behind how God works in the lives of believers, in relation to the adversities of life. Unbelievers who might read or listen to this will find this especially difficult. If an unbeliever does not find out these things he may consider life to be just one long succession of things going wrong. It may well be, until the unbeliever takes solace in God’s dealings with him and begins to seek God and His ways, he will suffer more. It is one of the most important life lessons anyone can learn.</p>	<p>Norman Grubb spoke of life’s adversities in this way.</p> <p><i>“The Bible makes it plain that God as purposively sends the unpleasant as the pleasant. No reader (who has read Old and New Testaments) can call that into question. God’s will and its outworking in our lives is not permissive, but determined. When even Satan is only God’s agent, and evil men only fulfilling His foreordained plan, then we can start off by praising God for adversity and counting it all joy..... Adversity is prosperity in disguise.”</i> Grubb pp 95</p> <p>Having now introduced the concept of adversity and its frequency we can now move on to examine it more closely.</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>What does scripture say about woe and adversity – which we normally refer to as suffering? Suffering in the Christian life is a certainty. Consider these verses.</p>	<p>We are appointed to suffering</p> <p><i>“...no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. We told you...we would suffer tribulation... (1 Thess 3:3-4) “For it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him.” (Phil 1:29)</i></p> <p>Suffering is not strange, but normal part of the Christian life.</p> <p><i>“...do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached in the name of Christ, blessed are you for the Spirit of glory rests on you.” (1 Pet 4:12-14)</i></p>	<p><i>Suffering should not be a surprise to us.</i></p> <p><i>Believing and suffering are closely associated.</i></p>

Suffering is necessary in order to know Christ

I count all things loss....that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness....that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” From Phil 3:8-10.

Suffering is difficult

“We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed - always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” (2 Cor 4:8-10)

We should be joyous in suffering – but still be overcomers.

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” (James 1:2-4)

“Be....rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;...(Rom 12:12) “...if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.” (1 Pet 4:16)

“...In all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God; in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,.... as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as and yet having nothing, possessing all things.” 2 Cor 6:4, 9-10.

But hope brings consolation – and deliverance.

“ Our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the suffering, so also you will partake of the consolation.” 2 Cor 1:7.“...we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance and perseverance, character and character, hope. (Rom 5:3-4)

“The righteous cry out, and the Lord delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite heart. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” Ps 34:17-19.

Rejoice in suffering as it is a normal part of the Christian life.

If you really want to get to know Christ personally then get to learn to accept suffering with Him.

No matter what happens we persevere, living in the death of our life in order to live the resurrection life for others.

Our faith will be tested in order to bring perfection.

Rejoicing is possible because all things are in Him and His purposes.

We are dying, yet we live – in Him.

Our progression is suffering to perseverance, to character, to hope.

Broken hearts and afflictions lead to deliverance.

<p>9</p>	<p>So, now having dealt with the source and types of adversity, let us move onto God's purposes in it all.</p> <p>1. God's purposes in adversity.</p> <p>2. How does God teach us through adversity?</p>	<p><i>So how does God use adversity to teach us better ways to live?</i></p> <p>There are many guides like Psalm 1 which express God's expectations about how man should live and the consequences of not doing so. Basically it says that those who go God's way will prosper in life and those who do not, shall not prosper. For those who do it His way, they prosper and those who don't suffer. Here is the psalm.</p> <p><i>"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish."</i></p> <p><i>So, given that basic position that God's people will do well and those who do not acknowledge God shall not (even their own human effort shall ultimately fail them) let us first look at more reasons for <u>the adversities that come to believers</u>.</i></p> <p>Yes they do suffer them and there are godly reasons for this. Right through the Bible God tells us to positively view adversity – to be joyful in it. The average person on reading this might think that perhaps God is some sort of a nut. Why should we be joyful in adversity?</p> <p>For believers the reason is simple. <u>God uses adversity to sharpen us up and refine us into the sort of person He wants us to be.</u> Scripture tells hundreds of stories that demonstrate that principle. King David once said that had God not afflicted him he would not have learned right ways. The Bible also teaches those principles in many places. Believers who know and realize this is how God works, normally after asking God lots of "why's", eventually come to realize that many clouds of misfortune will probably have a silver lining. Of course any adversity caused by our folly is exempt from this good. God does not reward us for doing stupid things. But genuine adversity allowed by God for our own benefit, will bring benefit if we take notice of the point being made and change our attitude and behaviour accordingly.</p>	<p>Not all believers know that they do not have to put vast effort into their life in Christ. When they realize they have exchanged the old life of striving for the new life in Christ, of letting the Lord provide His strength and wisdom, they accept this new life they have. Believers may think they have to try hard, because they do not think they can do it themselves (they can't) and so they avoid seriously considering God and what He offers, or don't know what the real offer is. It is the knowledge and experience of the life of Christ within – and living out of and from the experience of that life.</p> <p>So, God uses adversity both in the life of believers and unbelievers. With believers to enhance their life by bringing them into closer relationship with Himself and with unbelievers by bringing them into initial relationship with Himself so He can call them sons of God and provide for and guide them into their new life. It is certain to be difficult and sometimes painful, but the rewards are great for those who persevere. Ultimately it settles the eternal destiny of every human being.</p>
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		<p>So the adversity suffered by believers, providing it is not caused by their own stupidity, will ultimately benefit them if they view it as God's teaching of them. We, even as believers can be sinful and stubborn and like children, need disciplining for our wrong ways and stubbornness. Even as mature adults, we need to correct our ways to learn more of God's ways. God actually allows or causes such adversities as an act of His love for the believer, so that He can bring greater benefit to the believer out of the greater obedience that results.</p> <p>Reader or listener, whether you be unbeliever or believer, or doubter or backslider, try to see your life and the adversity that sometimes come as a wake up call from God, summoning you into fullness of life with Christ, both here on earth and later in heaven.</p>	<p>In this life, acceptance, perseverance and thankfulness go a long way with God. That enables God to work in us the brokenness He needs in order to use us.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Adversity leads to brokenness, which leads to true spiritual life.</p>	<p>Adversity leads to brokenness and brokenness of us as vessels is what God needs before He can use us.</p> <p>There are many scriptural examples of God's use of brokenness to prepare His people to do His will.</p> <p>The extreme example is that the body of Jesus had to be broken, so that our salvation could be made possible, by His death and resurrection.</p> <p>Brokenness is a law in the physical realm also. Jesus used the grain of wheat falling to the ground and dying as a physical example of what takes place in the spiritual realm.</p> <p><i>"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." (John 12:24-25)</i></p>	<p>Just as the grain of wheat needs to be dead in order to be broken, it is clear from the whole counsel of scripture, that our brokenness is necessary in order that we have the life Jesus refers to in this text.</p> <p>Personally I want to tell you that I am very familiar with God's way of brokenness. Although there is nothing that can measure or compare brokenness one with another, so I cannot compare mine with yours, I know a measure of brokenness, sometimes measured by Paul's loss of all things - in order to know Christ.</p>

		<p>During my attempts to follow the Lord, living out His life from within me, (since 2001) I have discovered that what scripture says about suffering actually happened in my life. We cannot organize these things in our own lives, but God can and does. Just merely speaking truth (as it is expressed in these studies) is sufficient to attract negative response from some believers, particularly from sections of the church steeped in church traditions or those not loosed from the freedom of the law, or not walking in faith or in the Spirit. I have experienced attitudes of great suspicion toward me, even because I have sometimes said simple things like, <i>"the Lord has led me into knowing or doing some Spirit directed thing."</i></p> <p>My wife has often related our lives (at least in part) with Paul's statement in Phil 2:17.</p> <p><i>"Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all."</i></p>	<p>Notice how he connects being poured out with rejoicing. Not easy, but necessary as it is an indicator of an acceptance of God's sovereignty over our lives.</p> <p>And yet our measures of our personal adversity and brokenness cannot be compared with so many around the world, who are deprived in so many ways, of food, drink, freedom and sometimes even life itself. God in His ruling sovereignty knows what to do with each and every saint of His.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Learn from a great Saint – Hudson Taylor</p>	<p><i>Marshall Bloomhall writing about Hudson Taylor the Missionary said, "The secret of his (Hudson Taylor's) rest of heart, amid such tempests of hate, was his refusal to look at second causes. His times were in God's hands. He believed that it was with God, and GOD ALONE, he had to do. This is strikingly brought out in his article entitled "Blessed Adversity." With the experiences of Job as his text, he wrote:</i></p> <p><i>"Even Satan did not presume to ask God to be allowed himself to afflict Job. In the first chapter and the eleventh verse he says: 'Put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face.' Satan knew that none but God could touch Job; and when Satan was permitted to afflict him, Job was quite right in recognizing the Lord Himself as the doer of these things which He permitted to be done.</i></p> <p><i>"Oftentimes shall we be helped and blessed if we bear in mind that Satan is servant, and not master, and that he and wicked men incited by him are only permitted to do that which God by His determinate council and foreknowledge has before determined shall be done. Come joy, or come sorrow, we may always take it from the hand of God.</i></p>	<p>So the idea here is not to look at second causes because ultimately all comes back to God and His sovereign will. This seems a good opportunity to mention that this reliance on God alone is exactly what faith and trust in God are all about.</p> <p>Seeing that Christ is our life and our life is in Christ, then God knows each beginning from each end – and we are safe, no matter what the situation – safe, not in the sense that no adversity will come, but safe knowing that God is in control of everything that comes our way.</p>

12

The hidden blessings of adversity

Adversity in life has the greatest of blessings – here are just a few.

What can we say? Perhaps we could say that in God - The darkest of nights may have the brightest of days. The worst of things may lead to the best of things.

Out of chastening comes righteousness & holiness.

"If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:7-11)

Out of suffering comes perfection, strength and settling

"May the God of grace....after you have suffered for a little, while, perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you." (1 Pet 5:10)

Out of reviling and persecution comes blessedness

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake." (Matt 5:11)

Out of losing our life and we find our real life.

"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matt 10:39)

Out of enduring, we shall live and reign with Him

"This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us." (2 Timothy 2:11-12)

Out of affliction we learn obedience.

Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word. (Psalm 119:67)

From His way of living I come forth as gold.

"But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. (Job 23:10)

Out of death comes the life of Christ within us

For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2 Cor 4:11)

Out of suffering come joint heirship and glorification

"and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." (Rom 8:17)

Out of service, we receive honour.

If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour. (John 12:26)

Out of God's discipline comes freedom from God's condemnation.

"But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." (1 Cor 11:32)

What a vast array of benefit comes out of enduring any and all forms of adversity! – Isn't God just so wonderful!

<p>13</p>	<p>Short Summary</p>	<p>No matter how much we might describe adversity and brokenness, there is always an element of mystery in it, as there is in all aspects of the Gospel. We must remember these things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is God's world. He created it and He rules over it. • He is sovereign over everything that happens in the world • There will be many things we do not understand but need to accept and trust that God has the best solution in mind. • Adversity, woe and brokenness in all their forms, are commonplace in scripture and in life. • Adversity and woe in all their forms, are able to lead to brokenness in willing believers, for God to achieve His will through them. • Real life in the Spirit is really impossible without some degree of brokenness to refine us, even after initial regeneration. • It takes a bold heart to accept these things. However, we must trust that God does these things in a measured way to help us through them. 	<p><i>Prayer</i> <i>Father, these are challenging things indeed. There is a great cost involved in accepting, understanding and following Christ through this path of suffering He said we would experience.</i> <i>I pray that I myself, having been guided to write out of present understanding, might accept the cost of true life in Christ – and that those reading and listening might find the same, through the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus and the courage to walk in the same way. Amen!</i></p>
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This is the seventh in a series of articles to further outline and provide resource for believers to move towards Fullness of Life in Christ. *The eighth unit of study will continue the study of adversity.*

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Availability. *This study is for use in one to one teaching or in small groups by those who know this experience for themselves, or by those open to the Spirit to learn together.*