

Taught By Trouble

Sunday, July 13th, 1986

Psalm 119:71

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”

Let’s look for our message today from the Book of Psalms. The verse of Scripture that I am going to read and use for a text is in Psalm 119:71.

David writes, *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn thy statutes.”* In other words, David is saying; “I was taught by trouble; I was taught in and by the troubles that God brought upon me and into my life.”

If you want to read about real trouble, real trials and real afflictions, read the Book of Job. Here was a man who was tried by God as perhaps no other man that has ever been tried by God. He lost everything, literally everything. Job was so high; he said, *“I was at ease and God brought me so low.”*

Let’s just read about a few of the things that he had to say about this trial and this time of affliction. In Job 16: verses 11 and 12, now listen carefully, he said; *“God has delivered me into the hands of the ungodly. God has turned me over into the hands of the wicked. I was at ease but He hath broken me asunder. He hath taken me by the neck and shaken me to pieces.”* This is what Job said.

In Job 19:9, he says this; *“God hath stripped me of my glory. He hath taken the crown from my head. He has destroyed me on every side and I am clean gone; I am gone. All my friends hate me and they whom I love are turned against me.”*

In Job 23:8, he says; *“I go forward and God is not there.”* The Lord God not only took him by the neck and shook him to pieces and destroyed him on every side, but God withheld His presence from Job.

He said, *“I go forward and He is not there. I go backward and I cannot see Him. On the left hand I cannot behold Him. He hideth Himself on the right hand. I cannot see God; I cannot find God. Job was so high and was brought so low.”*

Listen to this carefully; Job didn’t try to hide his sorrows; *“He was a man in great sorrow; he wept.”* It is no sin to weep. It is no sin to mourn in time of trial and in time of sorrow. God’s people are people with tender hearts. When they bear the rod they feel it; they weep.

When they walk through the valley of trial and suffering, they hurt, they weep and they mourn in time of trouble.

Paul said this, *“I have great heaviness of heart; I have continual sorrow of heart for my brethren.”* Peter said this, *“If need be, you are in heaviness through many trials.”*

I see the hand of God in things that have happened in my life and you see the hand of God in things that have happened in your life. These trials still hurt. You still feel the pain and you still weep. It is no sin to feel pain and to weep and feel sorrow.

Paul said this, *“We sorrow but not as those who have no hope.”* We do sorrow and we do know what sorrow is. We know what trouble is and what trials are. *“We do not sorrow as those who have no hope.”*

When my son was killed in the Vietnam War, I knew it was God’s will and I knew it was the purpose of God. That did not take the hurt out of it; it still hurt and it hurt deeply. It hurt for a long time and it still hurts.

Just because we recognize the hand of God in a matter, it doesn’t take the hurt out of it, the affliction of it or the sorrow out of it; we sorrow. Don’t you ever let anyone tell you that it is a sin to weep or a sin to know what sorrow is. Our Lord was a *“man of sorrows acquainted with grief.”*

A believer’s sorrow is sanctified by worship. When Job received the sad news of the destruction of all his property; he was disappointed. When he received the news of the death of all ten of his children, he was plunged into deep sorrow, heavy grief and mourning.

Can you imagine even losing one child; he lost his whole family? He rent his clothes in sorrow. He shaved his head in grief. He fell down on the ground but he worshipped God. Now, there is the difference!

A believer’s sorrow is sanctified by worship. He didn’t murmur; He didn’t complain, He didn’t grumble or find fault with the purpose of God, not at all. He didn’t find fault with the providence of God.

He didn’t compare himself to others and say, “Why did this happen to me; it should have happened to the fellow down the road; I am a better man than he is; why did it happen to me and why didn’t it happen to him or to her?”

He didn't charge God with foolishness or injustice. When He brought him the news, his heart was broken; he was plunged into deep sorrow and tears. His heart was broken but he worshipped God.

Here is what I am saying, if grief presses you to the ground, then worship there. You don't have to jump up, run, click your heels and say that you don't hurt and that you aren't sorrowful. If grief presses you down to the ground, worship God there. If trial has laid you low, worship God there. If floods of sorrow have weighed you down, worship God there.

They came in and told Job that everything was gone and his children were all dead. He poured ashes on his head and tore his clothes and lay out on the ground in sackcloth, but he worshipped there. He fell down. It was his grief that brought him down. It was his sorrow that brought him down and it was his affliction that brought him down. He fell down and worshipped.

Not only should the time of trial and sorrow be a time of worship, but it should be a time of learning. That is what I am talking about in this message. We are taught by trouble and it is a time of learning.

David said in my text, *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn some things."* David talked to himself one time when he was in trouble in Psalm 42: 5 and 6. He is talking and says in Psalm 42:5, *"Why art thou cast down O my soul?"* His soul was cast down in sorrow.

He also said, *"Why are you cast down O my soul? Why are you troubled in me, soul; why are you troubled; hope thou in God? I will yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. Hope thou in God."*

David learned in his times of trouble that these men of God were sanctified by worship. They also realized that they were sanctified by a time of learning. They learned in time of trouble. They learned in the *"Valley of the shadow of death"* in time of affliction.

Job fell down and worshipped and he said; *"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."*

I am saying that Job learned four things in this awful time of sorrow and trouble:

I see all four things in what he is saying. The first thing that he learned was this; when they came and told him, *“The Sabeans fell upon your oxen. The Chaldeans fell upon your sheep and camel. The tornadoes struck the house and killed your children.”*

Job fell down and worshipped God and then he said some things. He learned some things. He said, *“Naked I came out of my mother’s womb and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”*

What did Job learn? First of all, he learned the brevity of life and the certainty of death. He said, *“I came; I shall return.”* That is his summary of life; *“I came and I shall return.”*

I read a story one time of an old man standing on a street corner. A friend of his walked up to him and they exchanged the time of day and a word of greeting. The friend said to the old man, “My friend; what is life?” The old man stood there silently, not saying a word, and in a moment, he turned and walked away.

Sometime later, these two men met again, this old man and his friend. The friend walked up to him and said, “The other day I asked you a question and you didn’t answer me.” The old man said, “I answered you.”

The friend didn’t think that he answered him. He said, “I asked you what life is and you were there and then suddenly, you were gone? You were there one moment and then you were gone, you never did answer my question.”

The old man said, “I did answer your question; you asked me, ‘what is life’ and I told you? That was my answer. My answer was we are here one moment and then we are gone the next.” We are here one moment and then gone and *“the place thereof shall know it no more.”* That my friend is life!

The Scripture says that life is like a *“steam vapor,”* it is like a *“shadow,”* a *“weaver’s shuttle.”* Job said in chapter 14:1-2, *“Man that is born of woman is few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down. He fleeth as a shadow and continueth not.”* Life is so brief. Job said, *“I came: I shall return.”*

I see life sometimes and I think of it as a processional or a parade as you stand watching a parade go by. We are going down the valley, one by one. There were old songs which use to say:

“We’re going down the valley one by one,

With our faces toward the setting of the sun.”

I think about my own life. When I was a child I knew my grandparents quite well. I spent quite a lot of time with my grandparents but they are gone; they were here. They were very real to me as a young boy. I use to spend days and weeks with them. They are gone.

My parents are gone. My only brother is gone and one of my sons is gone. They were here; they were really here and were here for a good while it seems like to me. It seems like they have been gone a long time.

So, Job learned, in this time of trouble that it shut him up to some truth. Maybe David was saying the same thing when he said, *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted”* that I might learn something, slow down and shut up that I might learn something. I will learn the brevity of life. I came and I will leave and my children are all gone.

Then, Job learned the frailty of earthly possessions. Listen to what he says, *“Naked I came.”* That is how he came. *“I came and I shall return. I came naked and that is the way that I am going.”* I didn’t bring anything with him and I am not going to take anything out with me.

Job had nothing when he was born, neither did you. He lived to accumulate great wealth. Job lived to accumulate great possessions and great wealth, large holdings, and a big family. Here he sat after the whirlwind of judgment has swept through and everything was gone; it was all gone.

Of course, when he got that case of boils and was scraping them with a piece of glass and was all but dead, thinking that it was the end. He said, *“Naked I came into this world and I am going out naked.”*

I will tell you this, when we leave this earth, we will take nothing with us; we will go out naked. Why is it so hard for us to learn this lesson that is so obvious that a man’s life does not consist in the things that he possesses?

You are born into this world, you grow up and you go to school. You get an education and start fighting for all that you can get. You fight for property, a boat, a house, a farm, stock, savings, securities, bonds, status, influence, power, prestige, office, and positions.

One day you get cancer or heart trouble, you lie down and die. You leave every bit of it. They won’t even remember you very long. There is a fellow down the road waiting to

take your place, take your job or take your position. There is someone that will be living in that house that you live in some day.

You may talk about your yard, your trees or your flowers; they are God's flowers and God's trees. Someone else will lease that land some day and live on it. He will be gone too; *"The fashion of this world fadeth away."* Someone will move in, he dies; someone else will move in, he dies and will be taken out. It just keeps on going like a procession.

The Lord told the rich, young, ruler, *"Sell all you have and give it to the poor and follow me."* He would like to have that option again wouldn't he? He made the wrong decision.

We can't learn it; we just can't learn it. *"If you be risen with Christ, set your affections on things above, not the things of the earth."* Here is the thing, if God is determined to teach us that lesson, He can teach it.

He will have to teach it in time of trouble or in time of trial because we are such poor learners when the sun is shining. We just don't have time to learn. We don't have the desire to learn. We are just bent on these things of the world and we just don't have time to sit down and listen; we are too busy.

He can make you not so busy, real quick. You might say, "I don't have time to read." Well, if He is pleased to show His grace to you, He will give you some time to read. People say that they don't have time to pray, time to worship God or time to search the Scriptures.

If you are one of His own, He will make the time for you. He may do it for you in a hard fashion. Job learned the frailty of earthly possessions.

Job learned something else; he saw the hand of God in everything. Listen to what he says, *"The Lord giveth and the Lord hath taken away."* He learned the brevity of life; he said, *"I came and I am going to leave."* He learned the frailty of human possessions, he said; *"Naked I came into this world and naked I am going to leave"* but in the meantime, "I am going to enjoy some things."

He enjoyed a house, a farm, some animals, a bunch of fine children, grandchildren and so forth. The Lord gave them to him and the *"Lord hath taken them away."*

Job learned and saw the hand of God in everything. He learned that what he had, God gave him; *"The Lord giveth."* Listen to Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:6, *"The Lord killeth and the Lord maketh alive. He bringeth down to the grave and He bringeth up."*

The Lord maketh poor and the Lord maketh rich.” “The Lord raises the beggar from the dunghill and sets him on the throne among princes.” Did you know that?

“What has thou that thou hast not received?” Paul asked that question in 1 Corinthians 4; he said, “Who maketh thee to differ; what do you have that you didn’t receive from God? If you received it, why do you boast as if you didn’t?”

Why are people so class conscience? You can let a fellow get a little bit of money and he gets so proud, boastful, high and mighty and lifted up above his poor neighbors; God gave it to him.

Let a man get a position. Say he is elected chief of police, a mayor, senator or a congressman. He gets so all-fired proud and arrogant like he did it himself. God gave it to him.

Let a fellow have a little strength and ability to play a little ball. These young kids do this in high school and they get so arrogant. In college, some of these star athletes get so proud. If anyone gets his neck broken on the football field, he gets sweet and humble all of a sudden.

“God gives and God takes away.” Job didn’t say that he earned it or that he deserved it. He didn’t say that it was a product of his hard work; he said, “The Lord giveth.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ said, *“A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above.”* James said, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from God with whom there is no change.”*

No, Job was a wise man; he learned something. He said, *“I came into this world naked and I am going to leave here naked.* In the meantime, I have enjoyed some rich blessings and some good gifts but the *‘Lord giveth.’”* All that he had materially, all that he had physically, and all that he had spiritually is the gift of God. Did you know that?

Repentance is the gift of God. Have you been led to repent toward God? It was *“the goodness of God that led you to repentance.”*

Have you been given faith in Christ and an understanding of the Scriptures? *“Faith is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. For God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son.”* John 5:11 says, *“This is the record; God hath given us eternal life.”* Romans 6:23 says, *“The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life.”*

Job saw that everything he had God gave him. Wait a minute! Job saw also that God was pleased to take it away and God did it. *“The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.”*

Now, this servant rushed in and said, *“These Sabeans have fallen upon the oxen and taken them away. The wicked Chaldeans have come down in a great band and have taken all the sheep and the camel.”* While he was yet speaking, another servant rushed in and said, *“A tornado hit the house where your children were having a celebration and it killed every one of them.”*

Job didn't fall down to the ground and tear his hair and rent his garments and say, “Those awful Sabeans; I am going after them.” He didn't say, “Those awful Chaldeans shouldn't have done that” or say, “that awful tornado, why did that happen?” No, he fell down and said, *“The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”*

Job learned that God gave and God has the right to take it away; it is His prerogative, His right; He is God. That is what David said in Psalm 39:9; this is a good text, *“I opened not my mouth, for God did it.”* That is a good time not to open your mouth. That is what David said.

Then, Eli, when Samuel told him that the Lord was pleased to kill both of his sons, the old man said; *“Well, it is the Lord; let Him do what He will.”*

Our Lord took Jeremiah up to the potter's house and let him watch the potter take the clay and mold a vessel on the wheel. He said, *“Jeremiah; as that clay is in the hands of the potter, so are you in my hands.”*

Paul picked it up and said, *“He will, according to His will, make of the same lump, a vessel unto honor and a vessel unto dishonor. It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth; it is of God that showeth mercy.”* God gave and God took away.

The fourth thing that Job saw was this; he saw that the Lord was to be praised in all things. This was the end of his little sermon when they brought the bad news, the horrible news. He fell down, tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes and wept openly.

He said, *“Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return thither. The Lord gave and the Lord now, (in His good providence and purpose), has taken it away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”*

Paul summed it up in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 by saying this, *“In everything give thanks.”* It doesn't matter whether it is a funeral or a wedding, give thanks. Acknowledge and recognize the hand of God in these things. It doesn't matter if it is a funeral or a wedding, give thanks in everything. Give thanks in birth or in death.

David said in Psalm 103; *“Blessed be the name of the Lord. Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me, bless His holy name, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thine diseases, who satisfieth thy mouth with good things so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle. Rejoice ever more.”*

Learn to give thanks. Any of us can give thanks in birth but He said to give thanks in everything, also in death. Give thanks in health, give thanks in sickness. I know this is difficult. There is something that we must not do and that is to throw up our hands and say, “I just can't get it; I can't attain unto it; I can't lay hold of it.” Let's try; Job did. Job like Elijah was a man of *“like passions.”*

Give thanks in gain or in loss. Give thanks in success or failure; give thanks in plenty or poverty. Give thanks in summer or winter. Why should we do this? The reason is because *“All things work together for the eternal good to them who love God, who are the called according to His purpose.”*

Learn in trouble; we are taught by trouble!