

40--- Rejoice in Your Sufferings?

Dr. Gary Smalley in his book "Change Your Heart Change Your Life" devotes a chapter to The High Value of Trials. That's right --- there is great value in trials. The Creator of the universe uses trials to mold and shape His people. **Romans 5:3-5** says "We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

Left to our own nature the stressful, traumatic and trying events of life produce negative thoughts, which can result in resentment and worry.

Romans 5 instructs us to replace resentment and worry with gratefulness. God knows that trouble is the best change agent there is! Dr. Smalley says "First, I love God. I trust him to bring good out of every trial when I open myself to the blessings that come from endurance with patience and hope. Second, I love my neighbor or enemy whose actions could do me harm. Suddenly my trials are no longer trials. They are character-strengthening exercises that make me more into the glorious creature that God intends me to be."

It's all about perspective! When we see life through our eyes we do not see what God intends. We see man's perspective. When we heed the scriptures and see life from God's perspective we see blessings. We gain perseverance, character and hope that is only available through the Holy Spirit. Over the years man has invented many tools to ease the physical burdens of life. However man has yet to devise anything better than God's Word to ease the spiritual burdens of life. God has a design for each life, He created us and He uses trials to change us, in the manner that aligns us with His design.

So why do we naturally gravitate toward seeing trials as a burden? Why do we see resentment and worry? Why are we not naturally grateful? Since the fall of Adam and Eve we have seen life through the eyes of fallen man. If we reject God then we are left with man's perspective of life. Man's perspective is not pretty. To transform resentment and worry into gratitude requires the

transforming of our mind. That transformation is described in **Romans 12:2** "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will". Once we have accepted God as the Creator and allowed Him access, then and only then can the Holy Spirit be unleashed. Only then can we count all trials as JOY!!

If you ever doubt God's ability to transform you study the story of Paul. Paul went from one of the greatest persecutors of Christians to a pillar of the Church. Dr. Smalley writes that Paul knew that his trials were the hammer and chisel of the Master Sculptor, chipping away at him and forming him into the One he loved more than anything in the world.

We all face trials- the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, divorce, estrangement from a child, business failures. My biggest trial was Friday July 13, 2012. In a single day, life dealt us a family tragedy, a job loss and a business failure. That day God took that burden off our shoulders and built perseverance, character and hope. And yes some thorns were not removed. It is now over thirteen years that my daughter and I have been estranged. I know it is her choice. But it is my choice to have the robe and ring ready as I look forward with hope to the day the prodigal daughter returns and she chooses to reopen our relationship. God has provided hope even when my nature is to be hurt and resent my daughter's decision.

My encouragement is to place **Colossians 3:16** in your heart- "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."

As you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs you'll discover there is no room in your heart for resentment and worry.

Personal Reflection:

Have you made the decision to allow the Holy Spirit to transform your resentment and worry into gratitude? If not, why not do it today? What burdens do you carry that can be shared with God? List them and ask Him to remove them from you.

Group Discussion:

Share the times in your life when you have allowed God to transform your resentment and worry with gratitude.

Share how that simple step of allowing God to transform you has made a difference in your life.