

God's Wonderful Purpose

By Ginny Larsen

So often I've asked God, "What is Your purpose?" Especially when we go through trials, we wonder what His purpose is. Our perspective usually will determine how we view "God's purpose" through our trials. If we are coming from a carnal perspective, we are thinking of how God is going to work our experiences together for *our* happiness and ease in this life, giving us all our dreams eventually and making us successful. No wonder so many worldly-minded Believers are disillusioned with Christianity when things begin to fall apart, when trials come, and when hardship seems to take over their lives and they don't find their dreams come true. Do we really want His purpose or do we want to convince Him to agree with ours?

One thing we can be sure – God loves us, and He is for us (Romans 8). And we don't always know or understand the lessons He is teaching us, how He is developing His own character in us, or how He will bring us through a particular trial. When we try to determine His purpose for a particular trial, we often find we cannot, or if we think we have, we find we were wrong. Just as a parent disciplines a child and trains that child toward the maturity and character he will need in life, God disciplines us. That child most likely will not understand until he is much older why his father disciplined him, and he may even doubt his father's love or intentions.

Many times, I find God has chosen a particular discipline for me that He has not chosen for others. Why is it they are able to go about enjoying certain things in life that I cannot? Why have I had this particular thing to deal with all my life, yet others never have to? Yet, when I look back, I see how God has used it to teach me self-discipline, contentment, trust in Him, and reliance on His power. I see there is a purpose that is beyond just my comfort or happiness. He has done something inside of me that only He could do. He has produced a character inside me that would not have come if I had always had everything the way I wanted it to be. He has turned my heart from pleasing myself to wanting to please Him in all. I've had to look to His Word to find His mind and heart, and I've had to submit myself to His will in the matter and realize that I don't belong to me, I belong to Him – bought with His blood. I've had to replace my delight in some *thing* to delighting in Him and His will, trusting His love and purpose in all. *"For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be **saved by His life**"* (Romans 5:10).

It is His life that now lives in me, saving me from the corruptions of the flesh and of this world. His very life is in me and is continually making known to me His own mind and heart through the obstacles I face here. I am always tempted to take the way of the flesh rather than the way of the Spirit when my happiness, my comfort, or my desires are threatened. But His life is always at work in me to produce that life in me, conforming me to it, as He is fitting us for Heaven. He is fitting us for His very own presence, to dwell there with Him forever. We have already, through faith in Him, been "put into Christ" when we trusted His salvation alone for ourselves. He is working that salvation out now day by day in our lives to conform us to the new creation He has made us in Christ.

Do we ever think our Abba for a moment neglects our highest good – He Who loved us so

much that He sent His only begotten Son to be a sacrifice for us? Do we ever think He has somehow forgotten us now and has left us to figure our way out of the seemingly impossible trial we face? Do we for a moment think that it is not important to Him? Do we trust His love no matter what seems to be happening to us?

I remember at one point in my life when I came to one of the darkest moments of my life—I felt I was at a sort of cross-roads. Will I believe in God or not? Will I trust His love or not? Is God good or is He not? I chose to believe, solely because of what His Word said, that He is God, that He is faithful, that He is good, and no matter what things looked like, I would praise Him through it. That was a long trial that had years go by before things got better or before I saw God’s answers to prayer and fulfillment of promises I felt He had given me. But I grew more than ever during that time, in my trust in God and in His Word, and He often manifested His love and goodness to me, though circumstances were very bleak. I learned more than at any other time in my life that He was faithful and that though I was weaker than ever, He was strong enough to hold onto me when I could not even hold onto Him. I learned that it was Him all along that had always held onto me and kept me, and I learned to rest in His care and in the outcome of all.

This was not a one-time lesson that I learned and then suddenly everything went my way and now I have this wonderful fulfilled life of all my dreams. I’ve had to relearn it, or should I say, reapply it again and again in more trials and situations in my life. In fact, I’ve learned that as long as I’m in this body of flesh in this world I will continually have to apply that faith in new ways as I walk through this journey facing the world, the flesh, and the devil. I can never let down my guard, become weary in well doing, or give up and faint. I’ve wanted to many times! I’ve wanted to say, “Lord, haven’t I had enough grief? Enough sorrow? Enough hardship? Isn’t there ever a time to just enjoy life and be done with the trials?” It’s not that the Lord hasn’t given me many blessings and enjoyments in life. In fact, because of the trials and what God has worked in my heart through them, I am able to enjoy those little things in life all the more and give Him glory for them, delighting in Him all the more—and in the blessings He has given. Simple pleasures mean more to me now than ever. He has given me much joy and even taught me to rejoice in my trials, not waiting for them to be gone. He has taught me more about enjoying life than I was able to do before the trials. In fact, sometimes when I see a godly trait in my heart, I am amazed and wonder, “Wow... that is not me... that’s You, Lord! How did You do that in my heart?”

“Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us” (Romans 5:2-5). “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, Who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him” (James 1:2-5).

It's when we endure the trial, walking by faith, simply trusting His hand through it all – those nail-scarred hands – that we find it produces endurance, character, hope, steadfastness and even joy in our lives. All of us have seen undisciplined children who are not at all happy. They cry and throw tantrums when they don't get their way, and the more they are given in to, the more unhappy they become – and the more tantrums they throw. Yet a disciplined child has learned to be secure in their parent's love and care, and they are content. It is the same with God's children. Those who accept His discipline and do not throw tantrums like those trying to get their own way but trust His way (even if they don't understand it), find a contentment in life and security in His love and care—and even in His discipline. Each time they are tempted to balk under His hand of discipline, they are reminded it is from His love, and they must instead exercise faith in Him and walk the path He has chosen for them.

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire” (2 Peter 1:3-4).

It is through trusting His great and precious promises and applying them to our lives that we escape the corruption that is in the world. Many Christians do not escape that corruption because they live the Christian life their way instead of God's way. They make their own decisions based on what they want in life instead of seeking God's will for their lives. When they mess up their lives and find the corruption of the world has taken over their lives or families, then they cry out to God and wonder why it has happened. He is always teaching us to trust Him and to walk according to His Spirit. This is His purpose. He's conforming us to the image of His Son, for His own glory and our ultimate glorification in Him (Romans 8:28-31). When we do walk in faith, trusting His promises, His divine nature is formed in us more and more.

“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5-8).

The more we learn to know Him, the more we tend to walk like Him. He alone knows the path He has chosen for each one of us. We need to trust Him all along that path – applying His Word, appropriating by faith His promises for us, and walking in faith, believing He has provided for us *“every spiritual blessing in Heavenly places”* (Ephesians 1:3) and *“all that we need that pertains to life and godliness”* (2 Peter 1:3). When we're faced with what feels like the impossible, we can know that if God brought us to it, He also has a plan through it as we trust in Him. When our hearts sink for fear of what may be coming in an evil world that is more and more hostile toward Believers, we can look to Him and know He has already seen what's ahead and is there waiting for us. He already has made the way for us. We can only get through it in a way that will bring Him glory and benefit our own lives if we trust Him through it, knowing He does have a wonderful purpose.

One thing that has happened in my own life that is only a result of God's discipline, through my trials, is a true love for God's will in my life. I used to "accept" God's will because I knew in my head it was right and best. But I didn't "love" God's will. I've learned now to love His will because I've seen and understood His will is not only best but is the only will that is good and that is life. I've learned to delight in His will because I delight in Him – in all He is. I don't always like the pain it brings me, but I trust that He will get me through the pain, and life will be at the other end. I don't want God to be anything other than what He is. I don't want to make Him into my image. I don't want to bring Him down to my level or to force Him to bend to my will (as though I could). I want to know Him truly, to know His will, to have His will alone be carried out in my life. I want His purpose to be fulfilled in me. I'm so thankful for His purposes and that He is faithful each day to all His children, never giving up working out those purposes in our lives. He is longsuffering, patient, and kind to us. He is for us, so who in the world can be against us?