

# Adventuring with God

with Jeanne Hedrick

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## God's Trust in Us

*"These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."*

1 Peter 1:7

Elijah. Job. Jeremiah. David. Paul. All great men of God by any standard. But they shared a common "gift" from God: suffering. Today we hear much of the blessing of God. We especially focus on the promises of peace and prosperity that will reward His faithful servants. But a careful reading of Scripture yields the troubling conclusion that those most loved and trusted by God were those most likely to live with anguish, opposition, ridicule, and other forms of suffering. Have you ever wondered, as I have, why that is?

Even God's beloved Son was not exempt from this "gift." He was a *man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*, misunderstood by nearly everyone, and abandoned on the night of His greatest need by His own followers. Even His Father turned His face away as Jesus agonized on the cross. Hebrews 5:8 tells us that He was in some way "perfected" by the things He suffered. A mystery indeed, how one that is perfect can be perfected in some deeper way. The task for which He was born far exceeded any other role ever given out. His assignment was to buy back all of mankind - to redeem from sin and the grave everyone who would believe. No wonder He was so hounded by hell while He walked on the earth! If He shrank back and let His fear of pain and rejection win, not one of us would be saved. But the Father knew the Son. He was confident that He would persevere and triumph. He would embrace the full extent of human suffering and still be able to glorify His Father in the midst of it.

Jesus isn't the only person who has been entrusted with a difficult assignment. *Have you considered my servant Job?* The pride in God's voice is evident as He extols Job's virtues

to his adversary, Satan, in Job chapter two. Here's a mere man, not the perfect God/man, yet God had faith in Job's perseverance too. He allowed tremendous suffering to come to him to showcase his extraordinary faith and devotion to God. And the same trust can be seen in the lives of the great prophets of the Old Testament and the disciples of the New. Consider the Apostle Paul's enviable job description: *This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name* (Acts 9:15-16).

It's not something we like to think about, is it? For one thing, it's not exactly an incentive for embracing the claims of Jesus Christ in the first place. But even after falling in love with Him and being born into His kingdom we aren't thrilled with the idea of difficulty. I love my creature comforts and the sweet times of communion in His presence. It's easy to convince myself that all the suffering to be done was done on the cross. .no need for me to enter into any. After all, that would only take away from Jesus' sacrifice, right? As enticing as this "country club" approach to Christianity might be, it just does not line up with Scripture. At some point we are forced to face this fact: God tries His servants in the fires of adversity to see their faith come forth as gold - something genuine that will stand the test of time.

Of course, some fires are hotter than others. Fortunately, God knows us intimately and knows what we can bear. He brings us along in the school of suffering as we are able to endure it. We may not be called, like Jeremiah, to bear the

sins of our entire nation upon our heart and to confront every evildoer with the message of God's judgment to come. We may never be called upon to spend time in jail for our faith or to reap a martyr's crown. But suffering will come – whether severe or mild - at certain seasons of our lives. And our choice comes in how we will receive it. If we see it as an expression of God's trust in us we may find it easier to share in His sufferings (Philippians 3:10). Knowing that He is with us to strength us sweetens the process considerably.

I have read that when gold is being heated up over fire to skim off the impurities, the goldsmith does not leave the pot for one instant. He watches intently because if he leaves it on the fire a moment too long the gold could be ruined. Our heavenly Father watches us just as intently.

Trials come for only as long as they need to and then they are gone, leaving behind a purer and stronger faith than before. In time, if we embrace the process, we are brought to a place where nothing can shake our confidence in Him.

*If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. Those of us who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good" (1 Peter 4:16, 19).* It is a gift we will not request from our Father, that's for sure. But if God allows it, we can relax. He has our best interests at heart and He is exercising a deep trust in us. He will see us safely through as we cling tightly to Him. When our faith comes forth as gold, we will glorify Him with a new brilliance and intensity. Then He can brag about us too. *Have you seen my servant \_\_\_\_?*

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"Blessed be Your name in the land that is plentiful, where Your streams of abundance flow, blessed be Your name.

And blessed be Your name when I'm found in the desert place, though I walk through the wilderness, blessed be Your name.

Every blessing you pour out I'll turn back to praise, and when the darkness closes in, Lord, still I will say: Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be Your name. Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be Your glorious name.

You give and take away; You give and take away; my heart will choose to say, Lord, blessed be Your name!

Blessed be Your name when the sun's shining down on me, when the world's "all as it should be" blessed be Your name.

**And blessed be Your name on the road marked with suffering, though there's pain in the offering, blessed be Your name."**

(Beth & Matt Redman, Kingsway's Thankyou Music, 2002)

