

Mystery of Life, Hidden Blessing¹ 'Unser Herr lebt', issue 22 Gotthold Beck

2 Chronicles

32:7 "Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid or disheartened because of the king of Assyria or because of the army that accompanies him, because the one who is with us is greater than the one with him.

32:8 He only has the strength of his own flesh, but the LORD our God is with us to help us and to fight our battles." So the people were encouraged from what King Hezekiah of Judah told them.

We all face various problems, troubles or suffering as our lives go on. And very often, we do not know how to find the answers to these problems. So many helpless people are suffering from the problems in their lives.

One of our brothers in Germany, a very faithful man, had such an experience. He was a very wealthy man and had devoted himself to the glory of the Lord throughout his entire life. However, one day he suddenly lost all of his immense property and wealth. We cannot explain the reason for his loss from a human perspective. However, when this brother lost everything he had, he said, 'All men are given everything they need. We may not be given what we want, but all our needs are fulfilled.'

I also remember a lady who belonged to the sisters meeting in Aidlingen, Germany. She was a very faithful sister who had been serving the Lord for many years. However, one day, she came down with a hemorrhagic stroke, which left her half-paralyzed. Since then, she could not speak a word.

Nobody could explain why this happened to her. Difficult things happen to everyone. Often they can't find a way out, which leaves them in desperate situations.

Jacob from the Old Testament also had an experience like this.

Genesis

42:36 Their father Jacob told them, "You're causing me to lose my children! Joseph is gone. Now Simeon is gone, and you're planning to take Benjamin, too. Everything's going against me!"

Jacob did not rely on the Lord, but made most of his life decisions according to his own intention or abilities. For many years, he was a crafty man, and

he made a profit for himself using contemptible means. However, this man, who had been deceiving people, was in the end betrayed by everyone he knew. Jacob had to be taught clearly that no sin is overlooked by the Lord God. When Jacob said that, everything was going against him, he felt that everybody was acting against him. What should we do when, just like this, we seem to have failed at everything in our lives?

The first thing you have to keep in mind is that even though it seems as if everything is falling apart, it merely *seems* that way. In the case of Jacob, his beloved son Joseph was lost, but he knew he would certainly see him again someday. Simeon was not with him either, but he knew the day would surely come when they would meet again. When we see things from our perspectives as humans, we cannot see the truth; we are caught up in the feeling that everyone is acting against us or everything we do results in failure.

But this is totally wrong. The world is not actually against us: these things are actually prepared for the good of us. However, because of our nature, we cannot recognize this fact right away. This is the reason that all of these difficulties are called 'hidden blessings'. Why do we call them as such? In this article, we want to learn the reasons why these difficult things keep happening to us, why we are presented with all these troubles.

There are three answers to this question. Firstly, it is done for sinners to be saved. Secondly, it is done for believers to be changed. And finally, it is done for the sake of the ones already saved, so that they can truly serve the Lord.

1. For sinners to be saved.

When we look for the answer to this question, the first thing we can think of is that the Lord allows these incidents to happen for all sinners to be saved. Nothing is more important for men than to recognize the truth, that is to say, to meet Lord Jesus. So many people are left in the darkness seeking the answer, and do not realize that they are actually far from the truth. Most people are blind to the fact that they need the savior. Even when they have no choice but to accept this need for the savior, they still try to turn their eyes away from the truth. They try to avoid deeply contemplating the meaning of life or life after death.

So let me explain it this way: People have to be in a state of complete deprivation before they are saved. In other words, to be saved by God, we all need to

1 主は生きておられる 22 号、『人生の謎、隠された祝福』

first accept that we are lost. This world of today is characterized by material abundance. People do not have enough time to think deeply about the concept of eternity or the living God; they are only wrapped up in what they can see. This is exactly the reason the Lord lets all these unpleasant things happen to us, which are so difficult to understand. The intention of the Lord when He leads people is to draw them close to Himself so that they can understand the meaning of salvation and life.

Now let's look at two examples of such sinners, two prodigal sons from the Old and the New Testaments.

The first one is King Manasseh;

2 Chronicles

33:2 But he[Manasseh] practiced what the LORD considered to be evil by behaving detestably, as did the nations whom the LORD expelled in front of the Israelis.

33:9 This is how Manasseh deceived Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to practice more evil than the nations whom the LORD had eliminated in front of the Israelis.

33:10 The LORD kept on speaking to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention to him,

33:11 so the LORD brought in the army commanders who worked for the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him in bronze chains, and took him off to Babylon.

33:12 But when he was in trouble, he sought the face of the LORD his God, humbled himself magnificently before the God of his ancestors,

33:13 and prayed to him. Moved by Manasseh's entreaties, the LORD heard his supplications and brought him back to his kingdom in Jerusalem.

That's how Manasseh learned that the LORD is God.

Because King Manasseh did not want to obey what he was told, the Lord had no choice but to make him suffer; there was no other way to lead him. So, a series of incidents happened to Manasseh, which made him think that his life was going to be destroyed. Of course, these were not coincidences or accidents; the Lord was standing behind him, controlling everything in his hands. According to verse 11, the Lord 'captured Manasseh with hooks and took him off to Babylon'. It is not true that King Manasseh lost everything through this, but he was rather led to the end of his problem, to the end of his life as a refugee from the Lord God. As we can see, the intention of the Lord is to lead you, not to curse you or bring about your destruction. He does so to

open the eyes of your heart so that you can obtain eternal life and salvation. As stated in verses 12 and 13, 'when the King Manasseh was in trouble, he humbled himself magnificently before the God and prayed to him. Moved by his entreaties, the Lord heard his supplications and brought him back to his kingdom in Jerusalem. That's how Manasseh learned that the Lord is God.' King Manasseh, who used to be a prodigal son, went through so many tribulations; but he recovered entirely.

Now, let's look at the story of the prodigal son described in the New Testament.

He was filled with self-confidence as he walked out of his father's house. He wanted to break free from his chains, and decided to choose to enjoy his own life freely. When someone wants to walk on their own path, the Lord lets them walk the way they want. But, although everything may seem to go well initially, someday the time will come when nothing works out as they expect. When this son had used up all the money he had, he was abandoned by the people who had been good friends, and he finally found that he had no place to go.

Luke

15:14 After he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need.

15:15 So he went out to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

15:16 No one would give him anything, even though he would gladly have filled himself with the husks the pigs were eating.

However, after reaching the lowest point in his life, not only did he get his life back, but he was finally able to return to his father. This was actually the beginning of his new life, one so blessed and fulfilled.

So many difficulties lie ahead of us in our lives. However, our Lord always has a clear intention: To push down sinners like us to their lowest points and deprive us of everything. This is the way the Lord works upon us. It is not until we are deprived of everything we can depend upon that we can repent from the bottom of our hearts and believe truthfully in the Lord. This will bring us to the hands of the Lord God.

Acts

2:37 When the crowd that had gathered heard this, they were pierced to the heart. They asked Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

2:38 Peter answered them, "Every one of you must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

As we have seen so far, our Lord, who governs all things, lets all things happen for the salvation of sinners as well as the true understanding and repentance of the people.

2. For believers to be changed

Let's consider the question we keep asking: why, for what. The second answer is that the Lord, who governs all things, allows these things to happen so that believers will be changed.

Not only non-believers, but believers too experience the cruelty of fate. Believers too, are disappointed, devastated, and fall into difficult situations, the reasons for which they hardly understand. Why does the Lord allow difficult challenges to be brought into the lives of believers? It is to pour His life into them and to make them holy. It is also to be changed into the image of the Lord. Let's look at some examples from the bible:

Romans

8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.

8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

All the things that lie ahead in our lives, all the things that come into our lives are all carefully placed there by the Lord for his use. Thus, there is nothing valueless or purposeless among these. And most importantly, through these things, we will be reformed and be 'like the Lord'.

There are no coincidences or accidents in our lives. The Lord is behind everything, and the Lord always points us in the most appropriate direction. '*All things are expedient.*' Let us keep this in our minds always.

Good thing is....well, actually the best thing that can happen to us is to be reformed.

Because of this, when the Lord disciplines you, you may sometimes feel pain. You have to be broken into pieces when this happens. When it does happen, some people easily become disappointed and devastated, lose their courage, and even give themselves over to terrible despair. However, this is

only because they can see nothing more than what is right in front of them; they get discouraged when things don't work as they expect. Our Lord predestines all believers to eventually conform to the image of his Son. As stated in verse 29, '*For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers.*' How wonderful the purpose of the Lord is! It is of utmost importance that we keep our eyes on this purpose of the Lord.

Hebrews

12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

12:4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

12:9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

12:10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

As we can see from these verses, the father of our spirits disciplines us for our own good, so that we may share in his holiness. The Lord gives infinite love to all that belong to him. This is the reason he disciplines and train us. Our Lord and his guidance are so perfect. Very often we do not and cannot understand all of His intentions, and thus become discouraged when facing difficult crises, sometimes sinking into self-pity. '*No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, for those who have been trained by it, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace*' (Verse 11). It is important to know that although you may be filled with grief sometimes, it is only transitional, and everything happening for your own good.

There is one thing we should not forget: The Lord is the one who always prepares the best for us, and we are His beloved children. Even when everything in our lives ends in failure, we can recognize the love of the Lord. All disciplines are actually the proof of the Lord's love for us. You may not understand it in the moment, but the time will come when you appreciate it and worship the Lord.

We also should always keep in mind the confession of David.

Psalms

119:67 Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

Now, let's look at the third answer to the question, 'Why, for what'.

3. For the saved to serve the Lord.

The Lord also allows many things to happen to those who already believe, who have already been saved. This is so that they can be true servants of the Lord.

Unfortunately, so many people, even though they have faith, are still like trees that do not bear any fruit: the Lord cannot use them. Why is this? It is because these people still believe that they do not have to rely on the Lord for everything in their lives. They do believe in the Lord, but they come to unknowingly depend on their own ability and knowledge. Actually, many believers hope to do something for the Lord, to serve the Lord sincerely; they even beg Him to make use of them. However, the reality is that these people are using the Lord for their own advantages, as excuses for something they want to do for themselves.

But it is actually the Lord who intends to use his believers. The Lord is willing to use them as His own vessels.

The ministration that bears everlasting fruit is the work of the Lord himself. Men should not take it upon themselves to do things for the Lord. This is why we must be broken down into pieces. When we are, people seem to act against believers like us, or the Lord has to treat us more severely.

Let us now take a quick look at two examples of such people.

Peter

The first example is Peter. Peter is characterized by his self-confidence and a strong spirit of independence. He was so confident in his abilities.

Luke

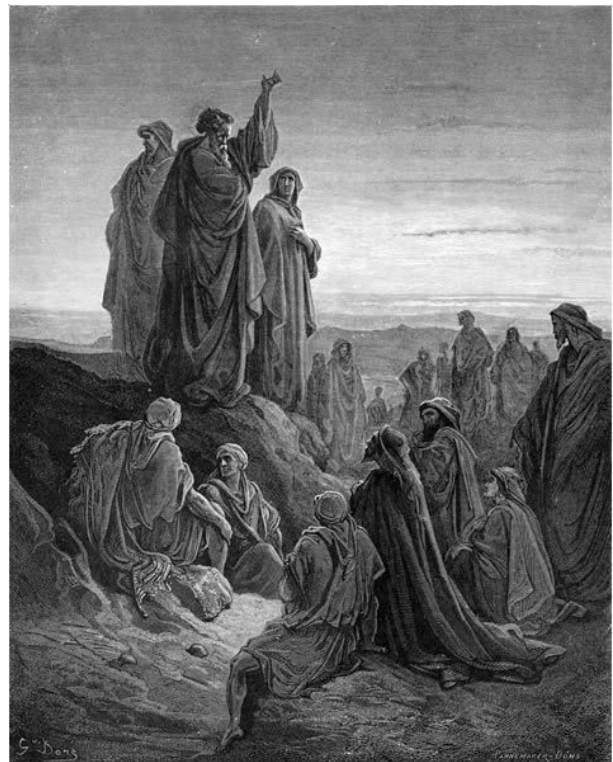
22:31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

22:32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

22:33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

22:34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

'Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has asked permission to sift all of you like wheat', read in verse 31. Jesus did not oppose the desire of Satan. Jesus' attitude against Peter was very harsh and cruel, but it was necessary for him. Please pay attention to the order that these characters appear in these verses. 'Satan' comes first. The next is 'I', which is Jesus, then, 'you' which is Simon Peter, and his brothers come last. The Lord intended to strengthen other brothers through Peter. For that purpose, Peter had to be absolutely broken. This was the reason that the devil was allowed to attack Peter. But while the devil's attack was going on, the Lord kept praying for Peter. Because of this, Satan could not act at will. We dwell completely in the hands of the Lord, which means we



receive eternal protection. The Lord was standing between Peter and the devil.

As Jesus predicted, Peter totally failed after this. He was pushed to the edge of a precipice. He was left in darkness and could not see a ray of hope. He had lost all hope, was in a desperate situation. This was Peter's critical discipline. After this, Peter could not reply on his own anymore. This was the moment the Lord knew He could use Peter to serve Him for the first time. The Pentecost is a good example, when more than 3000 people were saved through Peter, according to the Bible.

Acts

2:14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

2:39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

2:40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Paul

The next example is Paul. Just like Peter, Paul had to walk through the abyss before he could become one to devote his life to serve the Lord. On his way to Damascus to capture Christians, he heard the voice of the Lord and was blinded by a dazzling light from heaven, which left him blind for three days. Later, he testified his experience in the bible;

2 Corinthians

3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

3:6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

We all know what we need to do to bear fruit. We must deny ourselves and let our old selves die.

John

12:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

As we have seen, so many people still struggle under heavy burdens, have no place to run, and are agonized in hopeless situations. They are crying over their terrible pain and wondering why they have to go through such ordeals. The first reason is because they are not yet confident about their salvation, and they still do not firmly believe in the Lord Jesus as their precious savior. Secondly, it happens because the savior tries to change them to the image of Himself. It is more important to be cleansed than to just be saved. And the third reason is that the Lord now wants to use them as his own vessels, them who have been using the Lord for so many years.

The Lord our God was the one *'who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery, and who led you through the vast and dangerous desert, that parched land without water, with its poisonous snakes and scorpions. He brought water out of solid rock for you'* (Deuteronomy 8:14-15). Huge obstacles blocking our paths in life, insurmountable ordeals, pain in our hearts which we can't evade; through all of these things, the Lord is trying to bring out our water. We can reach the Lord through these experiences. Only after walking through the abyss of life can we truly be blessed and receive real life. As it is stated in the Scripture, *'The one who believes in me, will have rivers of living water flowing from his heart'* (John 7:38).

Anyone who does not yet know the Lord Jesus Christ needs to repent and return to the Lord. They must, for their own salvation. People who have accepted Jesus still have to repent and keep returning to the Lord, to remain in the Lord's service as His instrument. Only those who abide in Lord Jesus, who unite themselves with the Lord, can be a channel from the fountain of life, through which the Lord Jesus can reveal himself. This is very similar to the process to refine iron into steel; it has to be done at extremely high temperatures. Just like this process, the Lord God knows that humans are imperfect, not worthy to be filled with the life of the Lord. They therefore must go through these many ordeals and challenges.

The sufferings of this present life are merely preparations for being taken up to Heaven after death. The Lord never loses anyone from his hands. The Lord will govern all things forever. On nights of

darkness or when you are overwhelmed by lamentations, the hands of the Lord are there to protect you. Hearts of the depressed and discouraged people will be healed, and will rejoice again. The Lord will always be the Lord. The Lord is flawless and never makes mistakes. Although we cannot understand all the things He does now, we must trust that the Lord knows what is best for us.

Romans

8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us.

2Corinthians

4:8 In every way we're troubled but not crushed, frustrated but not in despair,

4:9 persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed.

4:10 We are always carrying around the death of Jesus in our bodies, so that the life of Jesus may be clearly shown in our bodies.

4:16 That's why we are not discouraged. No, even if outwardly we are wearing out, inwardly we are being renewed each and every day.

4:17 This light, temporary nature of our suffering is producing for us an everlasting weight of glory, far beyond any comparison

Habakkuk

3:17 Even though the fig tree does not blossom, and there are no grapes on the vines; even if the olive harvest fails, and the fields produce nothing edible; even if the flock is snatched from the sheepfold, and there is no herd in the stalls—

3:18 as for me, I will rejoice in the LORD. I will find my joy in the God who delivers me.

3:19 The LORD God is my strength—he will make my feet like those of a deer, equipping me to tread on my mountain heights.