

'God Manifesting Himself in Adversity 2'

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer emphasizes that God often reveals Himself in times of adversity, encouraging believers to seek Him during struggles for spiritual growth and clarity.

Scripture: Numbers 20:1

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "God in Adversity"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes that God often reveals Himself in times of adversity, using the example of Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness. He explains that adversity serves as a catalyst for spiritual growth and a deeper understanding of God's presence, as it drives believers to seek Him more earnestly. Tozer encourages the congregation to embrace adversity as a means to experience God's glory and to recognize that true faith often flourishes in challenging times. He concludes by reminding the audience that while adversity may be painful, it ultimately leads to a greater manifestation of God's love and provision.

Transcript

"God Manifesting Himself in Adversity-Message 2"

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This is the second and last in a little series, sermons, series of tools that could be called a series on God appearing in adversity. Numbers, the twentieth chapter. Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation. I think I'd better break in right here and say, don't be worried about anything, because that's just a stiff north wind and it's rattling things. Everything is well built; it won't fall down. But it just noisy. Nobody's bothering anything. It's just the wind. They tell me on the Northside, they've got snow. God spared us out here up to now.

Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there. And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! And they didn't wish anything of the sort, but that was the way of getting at Moses. Why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? Wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of

seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink. They could have been over in the land if they had gone. Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces, at least Moses and Aaron did. And the glory of the Lord appeared unto them.

God appearing in adversity is the name of this two, this little series of two sermons. I pointed out that if we were the kind of people we ought to be, and that we're going to be sometime when we're perfected, we wouldn't need adversity to drive us to God. God could appear to us in prosperity. But being the kind of people we are, there seems to be a little spiritual law that God appears to His people in adversity more clearly than He does in prosperity. It was so with Moses. As long as everything went alright, they just went on. And when Moses got in a jam, then he ran for the door or the Tent of Meeting. And then the glory of God came down; and Moses had a visitation. God revealed Himself to Moses. And I pointed out last week that this is true all through the Scriptures; that it is not just an isolated instance, but that it's true all through the Bible.

Now, Moses endured adversity. And Moses was a liberator. For 400 years, the people had been in Egypt, and for maybe 350 years they had been slaves. When they first went down there, they were not slaves. They were given rather a fine reception as long as the pharaoh that knew Joseph was alive. But when the one died that knew Joseph and the new one arose, and a new generation arose, then they put the Jews under bondage. And they had been under that bondage now for seven generations we would say now, seven generations, 350 years, or perhaps more than seven generations.

And now comes the man of God, Moses, sent by the Lord God to deliver them completely, and he did. He had been successful in everything he had tried up to now. He had done the impossible. He had pulled out a small nation of slaves out from the midst of a great nation and the job was just about parallel to one man going over and liberating Czechoslovakia from the Russians. For Egypt was, if not the greatest, one of the very greatest nations in all the world at that time, and was very populous, very rich, very powerful. And Israel was very poor, very plain, and very weak, scattered about everywhere, a nation of slaves.

And Moses came and did the impossible. He went in in the name of the great I Am that I Am, and delivered the Jews from their Egyptian bondage, led them across the sea into the wilderness on their way to the Holy Land. And yet, do you know that Moses had to endure from the very people that he was liberating who still had lash marks on their backs, who still had teeth knocked out, that were knocked out by the handle of the slave driver's whip. Who still had eyes couldn't see because of the brutality they got, and who were limp because of the beatings they had taken; they still bore upon them the marks of their slavery and bondage and oppression. And the very man that was sent of God to lead them out, had to take from them, impudence and abuse, and disobedience and threats against his very life.

Now there we see something that's been true also in all history. All you have to do is read the Bible and you'll find the whole human race. Don't you Dutch people lean back and say, well, that wouldn't be us. You're just like everybody else. And you Swedes too, and you Scotsman and Englishman, and we mixtures who hardly know what we are. We're all like. Humanity is all alike. Ukrainians are like that too, Brother Fetlock. We're all like, we're all alike. And it's in us. It's the devil in us, in the human race. And the result is that we don't know our friend.

And when a Man stands up to keep us free, we scorn Him and condemn Him and spit upon Him. And when a man stands up and smiles and bows and kisses babies, with the firm intention of putting us under

everlasting bondage, we make a great hero out of him. But if he's dead long enough, then we glorify Him as we do Lincoln, and Washington. But what Washington had to go through, read history and see. The abuse Lincoln had to take, go down and ask for the old files of the newspapers, back to the days of Lincoln and see the cartoons, lampooning this fellow, calling him an ignorant ape. He had to endure it, then. But after it's over, and where he's dead long enough, then we make heroes out of him. That's all you have to do is be dead long enough, and they discover you are all right. But if you happen to be alive, and you're on the side of freedom and liberty, they're against you. And they were against Moses. So he had to take their incidence. There wasn't one of them there worthy to shake hands with him, and yet they scolded him, abused him as if he was a common dog, and even threatened his life.

We have right in our own United States of America now, men who are dangerous man, because their tendencies and direction is toward centralized government and ultimate dictatorship. And yet, they're the big heroes. We have serious minded, noble men who stand against all that, and they have to take a barrage of continual abuse from everybody, including the newspapers and radio commentators.

Now, it was a painful thing. It must have been a painful thing for Moses here; it must have been painful and discouraging, and at times, as I've said, dangerous. But in it all, there was a personal manifestation of God. And I don't want to introduce my own personal feelings into this, but I'd like to tell you this much. I'd like to tell you that I have a covenant with God. That if He can manifest himself more fully to me by bringing discouragements and adversity, then I want it. I want it.

Now, I don't know how much I'd be able to take. I might be like a little farm boy asking his Daddy whether he can push this wheelbarrow, and he couldn't even lift a wheelbarrow. He's asking for more than he's able to bear and I don't want to ask for more than I'm able to bear. But I think all of us together ought to unite in this, O God, let us have enough adversity to drive us to Thee. And don't spare us Lord, except remember, were made of dust and don't put more of a load on the dust than the dust can take, but put all we can bear. Because it's in adversity that God appears.

A personal manifestation of God came to Moses when the people were against Moses in the time of adversity. And Moses got the confirmation of his divine call. You know, that's a good thing. There are those who say, well, it's all faith and by faith and there we stand we let it faith. Naked faith as Wesley scornfully called it. But the men nowadays without scorn call it naked faith. But I noticed that in the Scriptures, men were human enough, even though they were prophets and seers and kings and priests and liberators, they had to have an occasional renewal of their commission. They had to have God sometimes pat their head and say, remember, I'm on your side, and remember, I called you. And Moses had to have that. And Moses did have that. Don't ever try to get more spiritual than the apostles and the prophets my brethren, never try it.

I read books occasionally or hear sermons droning over the radio. A fellow was trying to make us more spiritual than the prophets. They are always saying, now, the key word is. There are no keywords in the Scriptures. There aren't any. Nobody needs to come to me and say, the key word here. There are no key words anywhere. A man gets a letter from his girlfriend, he's way over there in Germany or Japan, serving his country in uniform, and he gets a letter from the girl he's going to marry. So, he goes over and sits down on his bunk and looks for the keyword. He doesn't do anything of the sort. He reads it to see what she has to say.

A man's uncle dies and the lawyer calls him in and starts to read the will. He has reason to believe he's inherited a lot of money. And he stops him and says, now let's go about this in a proper manner. Let's rightly divide this, find the key word. A lawyer would laugh at him. Find the key word? He said, aren't you interested in knowing you have \$100,000 coming. How do you care how it's worded? These brethren who go in for the keywords and who insist upon you just believing the keyword, and then gritting your teeth and bearing it until the Lord comes.

I don't go along with them at all brethren. I believe the Lord is coming and I believe there are times when you have to live by faith that's as cold and hard as a rock. But that's only occasionally. Most of the time, faith blooms and blossoms and brings forth fruit. And it shows evidence and has confirmation from God if it's real faith. And Moses did, Moses had his call. He had his call. He could have said, I have my call; I know where I'm going, but God came and confirmed his call and assured him and gave him courage and help. Don't try to be more spiritual than Moses. A lot of men try to get us to be more spiritual than Moses was, or Paul. I'll be satisfied if I can, if when I walk up and stand alongside of Moses, I'd be satisfied if I can see over his shoe sole. At least I'll be happy and surprised.

Well, I'd like to say to you that the cup of adversity is for everybody. You're going to have to drink it friends, you're going to have to drink it. Don't try to get out of it and don't think, well, if I can just hold on until the bell rings, I'll make it. The man who fights by hanging on, waltzing with his partner, till the bell saves him. No, it won't work that way dear friend. It won't work that way. Break loose and put up your fists because you're in a fight and you're in trouble. And you're here and the devil is here and the flesh is here and sin's here and the world's here and you're here, and you're not in heaven yet. And there's a battle on and so don't try to get out of it. Don't try to get out of it because you'll only find that you've gotten in worse at last.

The cup of adversity is for everybody, and we being who we are and what we are, that's most necessary that we notice that; that we being who we are and what we are and the world being what it is. Too much and too long continued prosperity is not good for us for numbers of reasons. One is, that it obscures the vision of God. For some strange reason, the happy, prosperous Christian who's having no trouble at all, slowly, the vision of God is obscured. And God has to send a thunderstorm and wind to rattle the windows of the house and strike the tree over yonder, and rain till the gutters run. And then when that's all over the air is clear again, and the vision of God comes back. That has to be. I wish it didn't you know. I wish that the Lord could walk with us as He did with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, but usually it isn't the cool of the day when the birds are singing and everything's quiet that God appears usually when you're being abused and threatened and in trouble or there's adversity of some sort. But that cup of adversity is for everybody.

Did you know that brutal and heart wounding adversity does two or three things? It disengages us from the snares of mortality. It disengages us from the world. Everything down here is mortal. Keep it in mind friend, keep it in mind. Keep it in mind. Everything down here is mortal. One of the seven sages of antiquity gained his earthly immortality by this saying, this too must pass away. And everything must pass away and you mustn't forget it. Don't get carried away by the new chrome trimming. Don't get carried away by the new picture window. Don't get carried away by the new style. Don't get carried away by the six lane highways and a wonderful view. I don't say you can have those things. It's perfectly alright with me. If you can afford them, have them and you won't bother me. Only one thing, don't let him get you. You drive your car, but see to it that no car drives you! Own your home, but see to it no home owns you.

And adversity disengages us from all of this and shakes it off. And the man whose fine clothes has begun to own him. When you get to cancer, he finds that clothes aren't that much after all. When he loses his business or his wife dies, or his child becomes a delinquent, or his business goes to pieces, or his property value goes down until he loses money and he's in trouble, or his neighbor next door threatens to break his neck and he can't make up with him and he's can't get things straightened out. The fellow is in trouble. He wants to live for Christ and he's determined to live for Christ, but from one direction or another, troubles coming. That disengages him. He doesn't like it, but it disengages him. It cuts him all the way around.

Somebody said a consecrated man was a man that God could pass his hand the whole way around and not find any strings any place. The man is completely separated from everything all the way around, and adversity does that. I wish I could tell you prosperity did, but it doesn't. Prosperity tends to make the skies cloud over and the vision of God dim. Adversity does the opposite. There will be a day when there'll be no adversity anywhere and you and I perfected. We will be able to live as the angels live and shall be like the angels in heaven, said Jesus, but not now.

So, I say this brutal adversity not only disengages you, but it prevents the fatal mistake of receiving this world as your final home. And there was never truer hymn written, it's Doggerel alright, I'll admit it. But there never was a truer song written than the one that says this world is not my home. This world is not my dwelling place. What is the rest? I don't know, but it's good song, second rate song, but it's a good one. This isn't your home friend. It was your home one time.

What is your home? See all these people moving up and down the street here going out to get cigarettes and then a Sunday paper and go back in sit down. And when they're weary of the Sunday paper, they turn on the TV. That's how they spend their Sundays. And then the afternoon they'll begin to drink. This is their home. Or, see these fine people out in Beverly Hills or up on the north coast. A \$1000 or \$1500 a month for an apartment, maid service, and three or four cars out there in front waiting for them. But this is their home. And that's the most terrible thing you can say about a man. This is his home, fallen earth, full of bones. This is his home. And if you could send a chemist out and let him analyze the surface of the earth, all around the Earth, he'd find blood and hair and gristle and bones. Human blood and hair and gristle and bones, the evidence that this fallen world is man's poor home.

But when you became a Christian, you changed at homes. When you became a Christian, you were born from above. That's why the Bible says except a man be born again, from above, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven. We were born the second time; we're born from above. Our homes all together changed. This is no longer our own. God and the kingdom and the presence of God, that's our home. And there we go. Now, you're living here for a while. You're living here, just as a man might go up into the north woods to fish and live up there two weeks. That isn't his home. He's just living there while. Just as a soldier in the barracks somewhere in Japan or Germany, he's living there a while, but that isn't his home. He longs for the hotdog stand and the country crossroad and the winding highway and the long corn stalks of Iowa. He wants to see his country again. It's not beyond many a boy to weep after he has gone to bed at night. He's got a bass voice and big strong fellow and he wouldn't let anybody know how homesick he is. But he's homesick and he wants to go home.

For the world has its home and this is it. Reality may be revealed by the degree of comfort he takes in the world. If he feels this is his place. If this is his home, why he's not much of a Christian. I listen to interviews sometimes, and they are people who have come from other countries here. When they get interviewed by

the newsman and when somebody asks somebody from another country, do you think you'd like to stay in America? And they say, oh no, no, I like to visit here, but I have my friends back at my home. I'm proud of them. I'm glad for them. Breathes there a man with soul so dead, who never to himself hath said, Scott said, this is my own, my native land. And our native land is above. Our citizenship is in heaven from whence also we look for a Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord. Your spirituality and your preparedness to meet the Lord may be determined by how much you feel at home here. If this is your home, you can have it. But Abraham refused. He saw Jesus' day and was glad and looked forward and looked in faith way beyond our time yet. He wouldn't build a city; he built a tent.

Now, another thing that adversity does and hardships and when things begin to break against you, as a church, or as an individual, or as a family. It opens a door in through which God can walk, shining and healing and fragrant. God walks into the door of adversity, smiling and shining and healing and sweet and fragrant and reassuring. So, I don't think we ought to back out on it. I think we ought to pray, lead us not into temptation O Lord, but send us whatever is good for us. My times are in my hands. My God, I wish them there. And I don't want to take my future out of the hands of God. I don't want to take the future of this church out of the hands of God.

So I say you must expect a little trouble down the way. But if you look for God in it, you'll find Him. Go to the tent of meeting. Don't try to fight it with your bare knuckles. Run to the tent of meeting. Go where God meets with men. Get down on your knees and you'll see a cloud and a fire, and you'll hear God's speak. Take the long view of everything. You know, faith always takes the long view. Men go up and down the country preaching a short view of faith, a myopic faith. A man has a wart on his hand and he prays for it and it's instantly healed. He's got a he's got a short new faith. And they make a career out of that, make money out of it and buy farms from the sickness of the people, because they've got a short view of everything. Their faith is a short, myopic view; get up close.

No, Faith is long-range my brethren. Faith takes the long view of things and says, wait a minute here now. We've got to think about tomorrow, next week, next year, next decade, maybe next century if the Lord tarries. Whether He tarries or not, take the long view. When trouble comes, don't look at the trouble, look above it or over past it. Take the long view of things; for faith takes the long view and God will appear to you and to your heart. And you will live and understand it. You will live and understand it. Did you know there's another little old song that isn't much of a song but there's truth in it, "We'll understand it better by and by. There are things you don't understand now that you will understand them by and by. You will know why it all was. And at that time, you will thank God with all your heart. You'll thank God that it was so.

I knew of an instance of a woman. She was a little bit severe. And she said to one her family, now, you're working, you pay in. They made her pay and she did pay. And she had to pay and her mother said now, it's alright, you're living here, you've got to pay. She did pay, paid in every week. And when she got married, her mother gave it all back to her and said, I wasn't keeping that. I had that in the bank for you. You know, you know that this is the way God does things. God frowns a bit and says, now, come on, obey. We say God, I don't see how I should, you expect that of me. I've got woes enough. And God says you're here and you're accepting my blessing and my grace. Do as I say, and we do as He says, then crisis comes and God says, here it is. I didn't want it. I just wanted to know I could have it and hand it back to you, with interest.

Well, you will be the richer if you listen to what I tell you. You'll be the poorer if you don't. And I repeat what I said as I closed last Sunday, that over the next months, we may see more of God than we have over the

last years. But I'll tell you something else, we'll see more trouble too. We'll see more adversity over the next weeks, months than we've seen for a while, but we'll see more of God.

I was reading an old hymn book this morning, 159 years-old, and I ran unto a hymn I never heard sung. Maybe some of you have sung it, but I never did and never heard it. It was written by John Newton. One of the few Calvinistic mystics that ever lived in the world. And here is what he said and I will read it and close my sermon. He said though troubles assail and dangers affright, though friends should all fail and foes all unite, yet one thing secures us whatever betide, the promise assures us the Lord will provide. The birds without barn or storehouse are fed, from them let us learn to trust for our bread. His saints what is fitting shall ne'er be denied, so long as it's written the Lord will provide. When Satan appears to stop up our path and fills us with fears we triumph by faith. He cannot take from us though oft he has tried, the heart cheering promise the LORD Will Provide. He tells us we are weak, our hope is in vain. The good that we seek we ne'er shall obtain. But when such suggestions our graces have tried, this answers all questions the Lord will provide. No strength of our own nor goodness we claim, our trust is all thrown on Jesus's name. That's the way he pronounced it then. In this our strong tower for safety we hide, the Lord is our power the LORD Will Provide. When life sinks apace, and death is in view, The word of His grace Shall comfort us through; Not fearing or doubting, With Christ on our side, We hope to die shouting, "The Lord will provide."

Ah Brother, they were Christians in those days. They faced up to death and trouble and then looked up and said, well thank God it's still written, the Lord will provide. God appears in adversity brethren. So, if you see adversity on the horizon, look a little further and you'll see God. Amen.

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