

When God Turns Your World Upside-Down

by Chuck Smith

God turns our world upside down to refine us and help us grow and develop in our relationship with Him.

Duration: 30:46

Scripture: Psalm 119:65-80, Proverbs 3:5-6, Jeremiah 48:11, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 25:14-30, Hebrews 5:12 - 6:3

Topics: "Gods Way"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of growth and not remaining stagnant in our spiritual journey. He references the apostle Paul's mindset of forgetting the past and pressing forward towards the high calling of God. The speaker also highlights the writer of Hebrews' exhortation to move beyond the basic principles of faith and into maturity. He warns against being stuck in a rut and only knowing the first principles of salvation. The speaker concludes by discussing how God often disrupts our ease in order to refine and mold us into vessels that are open and available for His purposes.

Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles now to Psalm 119. We'll begin reading at verse 65. We will read through verse 80.

I'll take the unnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead you in the even-numbered verses. Let's stand as we read the Word of God.

Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according unto thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed thy commandments. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I have kept thy word.

Thou art good and doest good, teach me thy statutes. The proud have forged a lie against me, but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. Their heart is as fat as grease, but I delight in thy law.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me.

Give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments. They that fear thee will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in thy word. I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort according to thy word unto thy servant. Let thy tender mercies come unto me that I may live, for thy law is my delight. Let the proud be ashamed, for they dealt perversely with me without a cause, but I will meditate in thy precepts.

Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed. Let's pray.

Lord, we know that you are faithful and that all things work together for good to those who love you and are called according to your purposes. And though many times we do not understand why we go through these kinds of unsettling experiences, we know, Lord, that you have a plan and a purpose in and through it all. So teach us, Lord, to commit our ways fully unto you, knowing that you are working out a perfect plan in each of our lives, though at times it may bring discomfort to us.

Yet, Lord, you are working. So open our hearts today to understanding, Lord, of your love and grace, even in the times of discomfort. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

This morning we'd like to draw your attention to the 48th chapter, beginning with verse 11, where Jeremiah is making a prophecy against Moab. He said, Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lease. He's not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity.

And therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels and break their bottles. And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence.

Have you ever felt that your world was being turned upside down? Just when you thought that things were really going smooth, then all of a sudden things seemed to turn topsy-turvy. Maybe you felt that you were set for life, had a good job with a large company, a strong retirement program. And then you discover your company has been bought out by another major company.

They're downsizing and you are being axed. And you wonder, what am I going to do? My world, in which I was so comfortable, is all of a sudden being shaken. And we find that the ease that we were once experiencing is no longer there.

God so often turns our world upside down. Because security and ease are not always the best thing for us spiritually. We find it very easy to rely upon job security, very easy to rely upon our retirement program.

And in reality, our trust is in our bank account rather than in the living God. And oftentimes when we find ourselves at these times of great ease that God brings disturbances into our lives, just to again have us focus our attention back on the Lord and our need of totally relying on him. In this chapter, Jeremiah is going to prophesy the destruction of Moab.

And the reason why Moab was going to be destroyed. The Moabites were descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham. And thus there is a relationship through Abraham and Lot between Israel and the Moabites.

However, once Israel came out of Egypt, Moab became an enemy to Israel. They really didn't want them passing through their land. And so you remember how King Balak of the Moabites sent over to Mesopotamia to call for a prophet by the name of Balaam to come and to curse these people that were coming through the land.

And this contention continued to exist at a time. And for a time, Moab was a vassal state to Israel. They were paying tribute or taxes to Israel.

But Moab was a place that was quite secure. In as much as to the east of Moab, there were just vast uninhabited desert area. To the west of Moab was the great Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea.

And so it was pretty well protected from enemies. It was an out-of-the-way kind of place. It wasn't a place where you would just be passing through, going somewhere.

It was just sort of a destination within itself. It was great farmland. It was noted for the vineyards.

Down in verse 32, it does speak of the vineyards of Sibna, and thus a wine producing country. You remember Naomi and her husband Elimelech, during a time of drought in Bethlehem, sold their properties and moved over to Moab, which was great farm country and usually a lot more rain than on the Israeli side of the Jordan. And while they were there, their two sons married girls who were Moabites.

But how that their sons died, as did the husband Elimelech. And when Naomi decided to move back to Bethlehem, one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, said that she was going to return with her. And as Ruth came back, she met and married a man by the name of Boaz, and thus Ruth became the great-grandmother of King David.

That's probably why when David was fleeing from Saul, that he took his family on over to Moab, probably to relatives on his great-grandmother's side for their protection, because his own future was very uncertain with Saul wanting to kill him. But the prophet Jeremiah now is in this chapter predicting the downfall of Moab. In verse 2, he said it's going to be cut off from being a nation.

In verses 3 to 5, he speaks of the great destruction of Moab. And in verse 8, he tells us that no city of the Moabites was going to be spared. Verse 7, he tells us the reason for the destruction.

They were trusting in their wealth. Because of the great fertile soil and all, it was a very wealthy nation. They had an abundance of agriculture, and thus they had become quite wealthy.

And they were trusting in that wealth. And then they were trusting in their false god, Chemosh. And because of that, their destruction was assured.

Now, as we read in our text, that Moab has been at ease from his youth. He has settled in his lease. He's not been emptied from vessel to vessel, and neither has he gone into captivity.

They were a people that enjoyed all of the comforts of life. They had never experienced going into captivity. They had been at ease from the beginning.

And thus, they had just sort of settled in their lease. Now, as he tells about settling in their lease, he's pretty much introducing us to the winemaking process. When grapes were crushed, the juice was put in these jugs.

And they would allow then the sediment to settle to the bottom. It was called lees or dregs. And for a time, it's good for the lees to be in the bottom because they add aroma and they add flavor to the juice.

But there comes a time, if they are left too long, that they begin to rot and they begin to sour. And they sour then the wine. So at the appropriate time, they would pour the wine from one jug to another, careful

not to pour any of the lees with it.

But the wine now flavorful and the sediment all gone, just pouring the upper part of the wine into the next jug. It was sort of a refining process. And so, Jeremiah uses this to sort of describe how that God oftentimes uses the disrupting of our ease by pouring us into another vessel.

Ease is something that we all seek. We have phrases like, take it easy man, or easy does it. And it looks like most of us are desiring that life of ease.

And so many of the home appliances are designed to make life easier for the women. Dishwashers. All you have to do is put the dishes in, pour in a little powder and turn the buttons and later on just go take your dishes out and put them in the cupboard.

I mean, no more dishwater hands and that kind of stuff, you know. Washers and dryers. Now, you ladies probably don't remember the scrub boards.

But, you know, they used to wash with scrub boards and then came washing machines with the ringers. But now, but then there was always the hanging of the clothes on the line. And then with the clothes that needed to be ironed, the sprinkling.

The old sprinkling bottle and sprinkle and roll them up and then you take them out and iron them. But we have steam irons. We have, but mainly we have wash and wear clothes and non-wrinkle type of fabric.

And so life is made so much easier. Vacuum cleaners. And now they are advertising a little vacuum cleaner that all you do is just push the button and it goes around the room by itself, you know.

And vacuums the floors for you. So that all of these things designed for ease, for comfort. So that you have more time to sit in front of the TV and pollute your mind with the garbage of those soap opera things.

And wonder why your husband can't be as handsome and all as that fellow on TV, you know. And it's a easy kind of a life that people so often seek after. That was the problem with Moab.

Moab, it had been at ease from her youth. Never disturbed. No enemies coming through the land.

And as the result, Moab is going to go into captivity because settling in the Lees too long. The rotten flavor now. And thus Moab had not been poured from vessel to vessel.

There's an inherent danger with too much ease. It does not build strength or character. People who have life easy have a tendency to be very shallow.

They really have no real depth of character. If you protect a tree completely from the wind, that tree is going to be weak. It needs the wind.

It needs the adversity of the wind in order that the roots might go deep and the tree might become strong. And so in our lives, adversity brings a depth to life. And it brings strength to our lives.

Moab had never had adversity. She had been at ease from her youth. Never poured from vessel to vessel.

And therefore, Moab was going to go into captivity. We seem to be creatures of habit. We get a routine and we get settled in that routine.

And we can become very irritable if someone dares to disturb our routine. Easy for us to become content with the status quo. But often, that can be the greatest enemy of progress, contentment with things as they are.

The thought that we have always done it this way can be a hindrance for searching for a better way to do it. God may be wanting to do something new in our lives or in our church. And we need to be open to it.

And oftentimes, if we're not, God will pour us out of our comfort zone. And we are poured from vessel to vessel so that we don't get settled in the lease, in the old systems that are now no longer productive or outdated. So often, it's necessary for God to close a door before we start looking for another door.

God has something that he desires to do for us. But we're very comfortable with where we're at. We're not really looking for another mission or another opportunity.

We're very comfortable where we're at. So God will then take us out of that comfort zone, pour us out into another vessel. And we say, oh, what's happening? Well, God is opening now our minds to seeking something different.

If our lives are committed to God, we place them in his hands. We should never be disturbed when disturbances come. Because that is often God just pouring us.

Into another vessel. Our Christian life should always be that of moving forward. Always engaged in divine activities.

Growth doesn't come by standing still. Paul spoke about how that he was forgetting those things which were behind and pressing for those things which were before as he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He said, I have not yet apprehended that for which I was apprehended.

There's still more to be done. There's still territory to be conquered for the kingdom of God. And thus we should always be looking to see what God might be wanting to do next in our lives and through our lives.

And if we're not looking, then God often will pour us from vessel to vessel. He will upset us in order that we might again be open and available to him. In the book of Hebrews, the writer declared, for when the time has come that you ought to be teaching others, you still need to be taught the very first principles of God's word.

You cannot handle the meat, the writer wrote. And so it's necessary to still give you milk. And then again, in chapter six of Hebrews, he said, now let's leave those first principles of the doctrine of Christ and let's go on into maturity.

Let's grow up. So easy to just sort of say, well, I've been saved and baptized. And so 10 years later, when you give your testimony, well, I was saved and baptized.

Another 10 years go by and your testimony is why I was saved and baptized. Well, you're in a rut. You're not growing.

That's all you know is just the first principles. He said, let's go on into maturity. Let's develop.

Let's not try and stay in a static position, but it's so important that we'd be going forward and pressing forward. Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He rather chided them.

He said, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual or on the spiritual level, but only on the carnal level for you are still babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with meat for up till now you were not able to handle the meat. Neither are you able to handle it yet for you are still carnal.

For as long as there is envying and strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal? And do you not walk as carnal men still babes in Christ? You know, babies are beautiful. They're just a thrill, a joy, a delight to watch them. They're in the crib and to see the various facial expressions and to see the beginning of the development of their coordination and their personalities.

It's always just a thrill and a joy. But if after 25 years, they're still in the crib, they're still crying for the bottle, they're still throwing their little tantrums. They're no longer cute.

It's no longer a joy or a delight. It's a heartbreak. I can remember when my first little girl, I can remember the first time she said, Dada, and I knew she was talking to me and talking about me.

And oh, what a thrill to hear her say Dada for the first time. Of course, I've been coaching her an awful lot to get her to say it, but I was sure that she was going to say Dada before she said Mama. And so I was really pressing for that one.

And what a thrill when I would walk into the room and see her there in the crib and she'd say Dada. Oh, touch my heart. But after all these years, if when I would see her now, she'd say Dada, it wouldn't be a thrill.

It would be a heartbreak because there's been no development. And there are people that are that way spiritually. As Paul said, you're still a babe in Christ.

You haven't grown up. You haven't matured. You're in a static condition.

And that was the problem with Moab. They had been at ease from their youth. They had never been disturbed.

They had never been poured from vessel to vessel. And thus the scent remained. It was beginning to smell bad, smell rotten.

And it was just lacking refinement. And so God, because he loves you, will seek to oftentimes pour you out of your comfort zone. And don't take that as an indication that God's angry with you.

God's upset. God doesn't love you when you are poured out of your comfort zone. It's really a sign that God does love you and he's tired of your saying Dada.

He wants you to grow up. He wants you to mature. He wants you to develop in your walk and in your relationship with him.

And he wants really to get you out of that environment where you are going nowhere and refine you and to keep you from souring and from just settling there in the leaves. May God keep us flexible and open to changes that he wants to bring into our lives. And may I not complain when he pours me into another vessel.

Then may I realize that this is God's way of refining my spiritual life. May I guard against just treading water, not growing, not developing. But may I always be going forward in the things of the spirit.

May I not try to hide and bury the talent that I might give it back to God intact. But may I be using what God has given to me for his glory, seeking to multiply it so that when I stand before him, it isn't that I've just spent my Christian experience in a arrested state of growth, but I'll be able to give to him that which he has given to me with interest. And hear his words, well done, good and faithful servant.

God help us. Father, we pray that you will help us. That we would not be as Moab, just a life of ease, settling in the leaves, never emptied from vessel to vessel.

But Lord, in the accomplishing of your purposes of refining us, we welcome Lord. You're pouring us from vessel to vessel that we will not find comfort or ease in the things of this world or security in the things of this world. May our comfort and our security, Lord, always be in our relationship with you.

Trusting you, Lord, always for all things. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

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