

Something Money Can't Buy (Part 12)

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes that God uses trials and hardships to strengthen our faith and develop a powerful testimony.

Duration: 31:40

Scripture: Genesis 12:2, Exodus 20:2, Psalm 119:49, Isaiah 43:2, Isaiah 46:9, Jeremiah 29:11

Topics: "Problems"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a testimony of God's faithfulness. He highlights that pastors and believers are seeking to hear from those who have experienced God's hand at work in their lives. The speaker also discusses the significance of God's choice of Jacob over Esau, and how God led the Israelites through slavery and hardship in Egypt. The sermon concludes with a personal anecdote about a man questioning his worthiness to preach due to his son's spiritual struggles.

Transcript

Last week we talked about the choosing of the seven deacons in the Book of Acts, and we're just going to take a little piece of the Book of Acts and talk about it. I really want to celebrate with you and have you understand why you go through problems like you do. Anybody here ever go through a problem since you've been a Christian? Raise one little finger if you've ever been through a problem.

If you've been through a lot, wave a hand. Alright. Why? If God's on the throne, why? If God sits on the throne and He's in charge, why? Why? Well, one of the seven men that were chosen to be a deacon, shall we call it, some people think this is the origin of deacons, was not only Philip who I told you about, but a man named Stephen.

The qualifications for a deacon, do you remember it? You had to be known to be full of the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom. Not just full of the Holy Spirit, full of wisdom, and we talked about that. Now, one of those people was named Stephen.

Let's look at what happened with Stephen. Now, Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. No one told him to, no one ordained him, he had never been to seminary, just a person's gift makes room for themself.

You know, if somebody after the service tonight starts praying for people and answers start coming, the word spreads, that person has a gift from God. Can't organize it, you can't teach it, there were no seminaries back then, you know, he just had something from God. Opposition arose, however, from members of the synagogue of the freed men, as it was called, Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria, which is in Egypt, as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia.

These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. That's good, by whom he spoke. The Spirit gave him wisdom, so no matter what they asked him, he knew how to answer.

Why? Because the Spirit was helping him. Well, how many want the Spirit to help you when you talk to people, and when people come up in your face about stuff, you have the Spirit to help you. Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, we have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God.

So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law, and they seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They produced false witnesses. This is a lot like Jesus, isn't it? They produced false witnesses who testified, this fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law.

Remember what they said about Jesus? This man said he'll destroy the temple and then raise it up in three days. For we have heard him, Stephen, say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, the temple, and change the customs Moses handed down to us. All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin, that was like the Jewish hierarchy and congress, looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

And then Stephen begins a message, and what he does is he meets the people where they are. They're Jewish, they're leaders. So he starts with the history of the Jewish people, and he starts with the call of Abraham.

And he just starts to tell that story, and it takes up the whole next chapter of the book of Acts, which I'm not going to read. All it is, is now you remember, men, that God chose Abraham when he was an heir of the Chaldees, and he's going through this whole history, all the way through Moses. In fact, he takes it all the way up to the building of the temple, and then he tells them, but God can't dwell in anything made by the hands of men.

And that's when things get tough, and they end up gnashing their teeth, and stone him, and they throw their garments at the feet of who? Anyone know? Saul of Tarsus. Right. So in the middle of the message, he says this, at the beginning of the message, now, because the patriarchs, that's the sons of Jacob, the 12 tribes, because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt, but God was with him, and rescued him from all his troubles.

And he gave Joseph wisdom, and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. So he made him ruler over Egypt, and all his palace. So in this story, he's telling them about Abraham, and Abraham couldn't have a child, and his wife was too old, but he did have a child.

God helped them, and that child's name, that son was named what? Abraham gave birth to who? Isaac. Right. Now Isaac, he had struggled, and he and his wife couldn't have a child, and then they finally had a

child, and they had twins.

How many remember their names? Jacob and Esau. Who was the chosen one of those two boys? Jacob. Who was the one who didn't care about the things of God? Esau.

Now, Jacob was the chosen one, and he had 12 sons. And those sons, remember God had promised, your posterity Abraham, you're going to possess the land. Although Abraham never owned any land, he lived in a tent.

So Jacob had 12 sons, and now we know that one of those sons, named Joseph, was hated by the other brothers, and sold down the river into Egypt. But there's a slant to this, which reveals something incredible about God, and how he does things. The same thing that's being referred to here, in the book of Joshua.

Joshua now is giving his very last talk to the people, and he's going to speak to this very same odd thing, about going down to Egypt into slavery. Listen to Joshua tell it. Joshua said to all the people, this is at the end of the book, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, long ago your forefathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham, and Nahor, lived beyond the river, that's the Euphrates, and worshiped other gods.

So Abraham and the whole group of them were a bunch of idolaters. But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the river, and led him throughout Canaan, and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob, and who? And here's the part.

I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his sons, they went down to Egypt. Now that makes no sense. Esau, the one who didn't want God, he got the hill country of Edom.

High, rocky country, not so pretty, but rocky and easily defended. And God gave to Esau and his descendants, who are called the Edomites, he gave them the land of Edom, and they settled there, which is just southeast of the promised land. That's what God gave to the one he rejected.

But the one that he chose, Jacob, his descendants, through Joseph, and all those stuff that went on, and the famine, and all of that, he said, their, Jacob's descendants, his people, they were sent down to Egypt. We wouldn't do that way. If you have two children, and you favor one, you give them the biggest piece of the cake.

You give the smaller piece of the cake to the one who's been bad, and is not on your good side. If you have two friends, and one is very dear to you, you give them, you spend the extra money at Christmas, and the other one, you give them a tie. You buy them a tie.

You go to Filene's, and get one of those things that are just like falling on the floor, and you just get it with the red little marker, and they're just like giving it away, \$4.99. Why? Because whoever you love more, you spend more, you treat them different. That's the way everything works, but not with God, not with God. God takes Esau, the one he rejects, and he gives him the land of Edom, but to Jacob, the one he chooses, the one who Jesus is going to come through the line, not of Esau, Jesus is going to come through the line of Jacob.

The kings are going to come through the line of Jacob, not Esau, so he sends him down to Egypt. Slavery, hardship, difficulty, God sees it all. That's where you're going.

Oh, I know some of you don't like this, but Lord, help me against this crowd of people who are against the word of the Lord. I love to talk about this, because this helps me so much in my life. This will help you if you're open.

We live with, you be nice to me, I'm nice to you, you're not nice to me, I won't be nice to you. God is. Oh, Esau, you don't want me, you can have Edom.

Jacob, you love me, I gave you visions, I made promises to you, you're going down to Egypt. Your descendants will go down to Egypt, and we know later Jacob actually went down there and died there, and then was dug up, and his bones were buried near his forefathers, near Shechem. So why? Well, you see, God does some things that must be done in our lives, but they can only be done through trouble.

This will explain so many things in your life. When God puts his hand on you and really wants to bless you, he's going to use trouble to get you where he wants to get you. He's going to use difficulty, wait, he's going to use difficulty, he's going to use hardship, he's going to use things that you and I have an aversion to, we don't want it, and God says, nope, that's where you're going.

But I don't want that, God says, it's not about what you want, it's about what you need, and I'm sending you to Egypt, because what I have for you in the end can only be accomplished by you going through school in Egypt. So I don't want to try to go along with this, because I want us to celebrate what happened down in Egypt. Number one, God broke the Israelites and led them to pray in Egypt.

There's no record anywhere in the text that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and especially those sons of Jacob, knew what prayer was about. There's no praying, there's no prayer meetings, there's no calling on God. It's not until they've been broken and hardship.

At first, they're blessed, because they're related to Joseph, and Joseph is the man in Egypt. But after a while, another pharaoh comes out who doesn't know who Joseph is, and then when they see them multiplying, and they see them getting stronger, they say, no, no, they're going to overwhelm us. So they make them slaves and treat them cruelly, and God permits the whole thing.

Because in that treatment, and in that difficulty, iron comes into their soul. They become a nation. They didn't become a nation under Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

They became a nation in Egypt, under hardship, under trouble, because then they were broken, and they realized, we can't do this without God. And they begin to cry out to God, and when God sends Moses finally at the appointed time, he says several times to Moses, Moses, you go to Pharaoh and tell him, let my people go, for their cry has come to me. Their cry has come to me.

It took a while, but they learned to pray. See, brothers and sisters, you and I might want the easy life. God wants to make us men and women of prayer.

He wants us to make us men and women of strong faith. How are we going to help other people who have no faith, unless we develop our faith? How in the world are you going to tell somebody to call on God, if you never called on God? How are you going to help somebody in emergency, and say, no, you just called the Lord, if you were never in an emergency, and you don't even know what you're talking about? Come on, let's put our hands together and thank God that he does things different than us. You think I liked that day when I didn't know how to pay the mortgage? You think I like crossing that street and being let down? You know the hot tears that were falling on my desk? I can see them now, hot tears falling on that black

painted desk, saying, God, what am I going to do? I can't even pay the first mortgage, but now I can stand in front of other pastors, and I can say, God will see you through it.

Oh, you don't know my situation. I know more than your situation. Come on, God is Jehovah-Jireh, but you and I have to live through it.

So the first thing is, God, in negative situations and hardships that he permits in our lives, he breaks us, because we're all cocky and self-sufficient, left to ourselves. All of us, we're proud like oxen. Excuse the expression, but we are.

We're proud like oxen. All of us think we can make it, and we start strutting around. Preachers, new Christians, older Christians, men, women, black, white, all the races, we all get to think we can make it, and God has to say, no, listen, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart.

I got to bring you to the place where you love trouble and difficulty, because you know my grace and my power is made perfect in your weakness. Come on, let's say amen to that. Say amen.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul talks about that. Therefore, I will glory in trials and tribulations and difficulties. What Christian in the world does that? Because I learned this secret, that in my weakness, his strength is made perfect.

What God is designing for our lives is not the American dream, ladies and gentlemen. He doesn't want me to live an easy life. He wants me to live a godly life.

He wants to put faith in me. He wants me to help other people. How am I going to do that unless I've been through the ringer? Okay, so we learn that they were broken and learned to pray only in Egypt.

There's no report of them praying before that, and through the rest of the Bible, you'll find in the history of Israel that God would have to send trouble and attacking enemies many times to get them to pray again. That's the way it is with some of us. The minute the sun comes out, we don't even go to church anymore.

Come on, am I right or I'm telling a lie? People I know, they just get married. They don't have two nickels to rub together. They have nothing.

They're involved in church. They're involved in everything. Oh, I need God.

I need God. I need God. And God begins to bless a little bit, and the blessing becomes a curse.

And that's why God says when you go into the land, and I bless you, you better remember to be thankful because I gave you everything you have, and if you forget that, I'll take it away so I can get you back to pray. Number two. First of all, he broke them and taught them to pray.

Number two, he put them in a situation where there had to be a manifestation of his power. When you're outnumbered and have no weaponry, and you're not organized, and you got Pharaoh and his minions driving you and beating you down, and then after the ten plagues and the Passover night, he then takes you to a Red Sea situation where you're boxed in. Don't you get it? It's a setup from God.

God wants to show how strong he can be on behalf of his people, but how is he going to do it until we're backed up against the wall? How's he going to get glory unless we can tell people, I didn't have a chance. I didn't know what to do, but God came through. I was ready to commit suicide, but he saved me.

I was living in guilt, but he lifted me. I was bound by that drug, but he broke the power of it. I was living in immorality and impurity, but he cleaned me up and he changed me.

But until our back is against the wall and we can't make the mortgage payment, how else is God going to show how great he is? When you have everything you need, how is God going to show how great he is? You can say, yeah, but he's the one giving us. Yeah, I know he's supplying everything, but he likes to sometimes remove everything, so you got nothing. Anybody here ever been in I got nothing situation? And then God says, oh, just exactly what I wanted.

This is good. I'm going to now show because you called out on me and you trusted me. So I want to say to everybody, don't you give up? Don't you give up trusting God? Don't you give praying? The time is coming.

The moment's coming. God's waiting until the manifestation of his power will do you and his name the most good. But this is why he saw you can have eat them.

But Jacob, you and your descendants, y'all going down to Egypt. You get beat down a little bit down there, get whipped. Pessimism, I don't want to hear that.

I am not here to tell you what you want to hear. I'm here to deliver the word of the Lord for all of us. How many know that what I'm saying from your own life, from your own life? How many know what I'm talking about is true.

Come on, lift your hand if you know what I'm talking about. That's why when you hear these prosperity and faith teachers, it's so silly, so silly. It's ridiculous.

As if God's main thing is to give me a lot of money and give me a big car to drive. He gives that to people who curse him. Ah, but to those who trust him, he does that inward work in our soul, makes a strong faith.

And then we get to situations where he can extend his hand, manifest his power. And you know what that results in as I close? He gives you something more valuable than all the money in the world. And I want all of you to have it.

He gives you a testimony. You know what the world is looking for? You know what pastors are looking for? Pastors around the country and the world are looking for someone who has a testimony, who trusted God, who saw God extend his hand. And God did it.

They want to talk to someone where God did it. Not theories, Calvinism, Arminianism, arguments about secondary matters. Pastors who are really hungry for God, they want to talk to someone as a testimony.

See, God wants you to have a testimony. The rest of the Old Testament, I never went to my concordance and checked it out. You know how many times God refers back to bringing them out of Egypt in the Bible? Read the Psalms, read the prophets, over and over.

For I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt. They had a testimony. They could talk to other people, you false gods, your worship has been a bunch of junk.

They can't speak, they can't move, they can't hear you when you pray, but our God is the living God. Oh, how do you know? Because we were in Egypt and he brought us out. Come on, put your hands together.

They had a testimony. So that's what God wants for all of us here. Wants us to have a testimony.

How else are we going to lift other people up? How else are we going to be an encouragement? The world's dying from discouragement and depression. And where are the people who are not judges of other people, but saviors, lifter uppers, taking people's hands and lifting them and say, I know God can help you. Why? He did it for me.

He'll do it for you. I'm so happy I can tell pastors that story of how God provided the first mortgage and a lot of other things I can tell them and say, listen, I wasn't even a good Christian growing up. Oh, I'm so happy I can say that.

I wasn't even a strong Christian. My mother's here. She's saying amen like 10 times right now under her breath.

Not even a good Christian. My brother was a better Christian. So was my sister.

Cutting class, cutting school off the wall. Good for nothing. But God in his mercy.

Come on, how many have a testimony like that? God in his mercy. Let me close. I just got a letter today.

I just reminded of it. I got to answer it. I'm gonna have a phone conversation with the man.

I can't answer him by writing. And he says to me, I read your book and we doing your DVD series on when God's people pray in our small groups and this. But I just want to tell you, my son is away from the Lord.

And I read and I wept in your book, Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire when you tell about your daughter. But I want I want to ask you a question, Pastor Simba. Did you feel when your daughter was away? Did you feel unworthy to go into the pulpit? Did you feel challenged? Because I'm so discouraged.

I feel like I'm not worthy to go up because how can I tell people something when my own son is not doing right before God? Although I did raise him in the things of God and he goes on and on. And you can see he's been been tramped down by the enemy and the enemy is just beating him down like this. I'm gonna talk to him on the phone.

I'm gonna tell him. I just don't have verses for you. I have a testimony.

I have a testimony. I don't don't have something from the Bible I want to quote. I want to quote the Bible to you.

But I want to tell you, God is real. He helped me through that. I know what you're feeling.

I know what you're going through. See, that's what brothers and sisters, God wants to do for you. He wants to make you a blessing.

Remember the promise to Abraham, I will bless you and make you a what? Most of us just want the first part. I will bless you. Not to bless us to get a blessing.

Bless me to make just have so I can say I'm blessed. I'm blessed. I'm blessed.

No, I will bless you and make you a blessing. I'm going to give you a testimony. I'm going to put you through stuff that you won't like.

But in the end, I'll bring you out. I'll bring you through the valley in the fire. It will not burn you when you go through the river.

The waters will not flow over you because I am the Lord your God and I am with you. Come on, everybody who loves God. Put your hand together.

We praise God. We praise God. I was speaking somewhere in another country recently to pastors and I told the people about the struggle I had.

Oh, what a struggle. New in the ministry. I was acting all fake and phony, trying to act like a preacher, trying to stand like a preacher.

Praise God. Hallelujah. It was so sad.

It was so sad. I felt so bad for the people in our church to have a pastor like me. And and I never could have the faith that to talk conversationally like I'm talking to you.

I could not believe that God could use me that way. I thought I had to act like a preacher. And I was sharing that the battles I had, the fears, the tears, the complexes.

One day riding in a car. I think I've mentioned that to you. I said to my wife just a few months in the ministry.

I said, how am I doing? Because she was a pastor's kid. She was ahead of me. I said, how am I doing? She said, you want to know? I said, yeah, horrible.

She had a word from the Lord for me. Horrible. I said, what do you mean? She says, that's not you.

You're acting like a preacher. Give it up. But I didn't have the faith.

You don't know the battles. And as I was sharing it, some minister broke down, started weeping, weeping. That's what he was going through.

Some young guy going through it, not thinking God could ever use him. Acting artificial, all Pentecostal or Baptist or church. You know, it's all veneer.

God can't use you if you're an actor. You got to be who you are. He brought me through, gave me a testimony.

He's bringing you through. Hey, he's bringing you through. You're not going under.

You're going to go over. Come on. Can we say one last amen? Clap our hands.

Okay. Close your eyes with me. Oh, I feel good in my soul tonight.

How many feel good in your soul tonight? Now you understand why you went through that? Yeah. No. Esau, he's not my chosen one.

He can have that easy stuff. Eat them. The mountains, he can defend it.

Ah, but my chosen ones, they're going down to Egypt. I'm going to teach them how to pray. I'm gonna break them.

I'm going to manifest my power through them. I'm going to let them get in situations where it's me or bust. And they're going to come out with a testimony.

They'll be able to tell people our God is the true God. You worship nothing. We worship the true God because he brought us out.

Praise God. Everybody just lift your hands up and praise him out loud. He is worthy to be praised.

Praise him with your mouth. Everyone in the building. Come on.

Some of you are holding back. Praise him out loud. We bless you, God.

I praise you out loud. I'm not ashamed to praise you. You've given us a testimony.

We have messed up, but you are greater than our mess-ups, God. You are greater than our mess-ups. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Praise him out loud.

The spirit is moving right now while we praise him out loud. We praise you out loud. We give you honor and glory.

Hallelujah. We praise you. We're not going to complain.

We're not going to feel sorry for ourselves. The steps of a righteous man are ordered by the Lord. You know exactly what you're doing, God.

Break us. Teach us to pray and trust you. Manifest your power in our lives so people might know.

Remember your word to your servant for you have given me hope, Lord. Make us a blessing to others through our testimony, Lord. It's for all of us, but how about in the balcony or downstairs you say, Pastor Cimbala, your words are like a glass of ice water in a desert because the enemy's trying to make me think God forgot me, God doesn't love me, this and that and so on and so forth.

And tonight I'm going to stand and I'm going to sing. Great is thy faithfulness. Great is thy faithfulness and great is thy faithfulness.

Your mercies are new every day. I'm not going to look at what I'm going through. I'm going to look at your purpose for my life.

If you're like that, get out of your seat and come up here so you can lead the way in singing. Come on. Every one of you say, Pastor, for me, I'm going to lead the way.

I am not going to give in to discouragement. I will not be depressed. I will not be angry.

No, my God is real. Father God, I thank you for your word today. Your word is pure.

Your word is so good. My soul is fed today. Esau can have Edom and its favorable position.

But the one I choose, the one I delight in, I'm going to Egypt. I'm going to break him. I'm going to break her.

Make her to totally depend on me. I'm going to teach her how to pray. I'm going to teach them how to pray so they can pray for others one day and minister life and bring blessing.

I'm going to put them in situations where I can manifest my power so that my name might be glorified. Because it's only in the hard place, the impossible place, that people focus on who I really am. And finally, I'm going to give my people something no one else has in the whole world.

They will have a testimony. They will be able to say, my God lives. He's alive.

He's alive. He's alive. He's alive.

He lifted me up. He brought me out. He brought me through.

He helped me. He healed me. He touched me.

So that we can be blessings. We can be your hand extended. Father God, we thank you that we can worship you by faith.

Sometimes we don't feel the way we'd like to feel. We don't see what we want to see. But Moses endured as seeing him who is invisible.

For we walk not by sight, but we walk by faith. So our faith is toward you tonight and our eyes are toward you, the eyes of our heart. And our moment is coming.

Different people in different ways. You're shaping everything out the way you want it to be so that you can show your power on our behalf. Show how faithful you are.

Bring us through one more time. Over the mountain one more time. Give us a testimony and make us a blessing to a world.

To a world, O God, help us not to think of ourselves, but help us to receive all of these things so that we can share them with others. We pray in Jesus name.

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