

Peril in Life's Changes

by J.R. Miller

The peril in life's changes can be met with cheerfulness and trust in God's guidance and plan, leading to wholesome outcome and disciplinary growth.

Scripture: James 1:2

Topics: "Divine Guidance", "Life Changes"

Description

J.R. Miller addresses the inherent perils associated with life's changes, emphasizing that transitions, whether from childhood to adulthood or through life's trials, can lead to significant challenges. He illustrates how sudden changes can disrupt personal growth and family dynamics, particularly when faced with adversity such as poverty or unexpected life events. Miller stresses the importance of divine guidance during these transitions, advocating for a perspective that views challenges as opportunities for growth rather than setbacks. He encourages individuals to embrace life's changes with faith, trusting that God can turn trials into blessings. Ultimately, Miller's message is one of hope, resilience, and the necessity of maintaining a strong connection to God's love amidst life's uncertainties.

Transcript

There is always peril in change. The more suddenly the change comes, and the greater it is, the more is the danger that hurt will result. There is danger in the ordinary changes of life, from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood and womanhood. Many do not make the transition safely. There always are certain things that must be left behind, as each period is abandoned for the one that follows it. The mother does not like to see her boy lose his curls and his boyish looks and ways. She wishes she could keep her baby always. But it would be a sad thing if he kept his childish manners, his immature development, his baby face and looks. This would be abnormal, an arrested growth, becoming a lasting grief. The transition must be made, and there is not meant to be any loss in it--but rather a gain.

As the blossom fades and falls off--but leaves its secret of life behind for the beginning of the fruit, so the change from boyhood is not intended to be the losing of anything--but an unfolding, a development. The true avails of childish sweetness and beauty, stay in the heart and life of youth, and become its strength. The change is safely passed, when the new emerges from the old in healthful grace and vigor.

But there is always danger in the transition, and not always is it safely passed. There is need of great wisdom in those who care for the child, for its education, for its health, for the directing of the influences which affect its growth. Many careers are wrecked in the early formative periods. It is the mission of the

ideal home--to be in every way a wholesome place for children to grow up in, a place of love, of joy and of cheer, not of over-kindness or over-indulgence, not of forcing processes or excessive stimulation, not of dullness, dreariness, or lack of vitalizing and energizing influences. The true education in this educational period is that which insures wholesome outcome, developing into richer, stronger, more beautiful life.

There is peril also in the changes that come through life's experiences. The impression prevails that pain and sorrow, for example, are always beneficent. It is admitted that there is danger in unbroken prosperity, in a life without adversity or trial--but somehow it is widely felt or believed that trouble always brings blessing, that at least it is a safe condition, tending toward good.

Yet there is peril also in suffering. It does not always make people better, sweeter in spirit, more patient, more heavenly minded. It is its mission to produce such results. There is a Beatitude for those that mourn. Tribulation is the way to the kingdom. The hard things of life are meant to be disciplinary. Earthly loss--should bring us heavenly gain. Pain should sweeten our spirits. Disappointments should teach us to accept God's appointments. We should always be better for affliction.

But not always are we thus helped and made better by trial. Sickness sometimes makes people unhappy, discontented, impatient, exacting, selfish. Pain sometimes brings out not the best--but the worst in one's nature. Some men and women are sorely hurt in their disposition by it. Loss sometimes proves loss indeed, leaving nothing in its place to supply the lack of that which is taken away. Grief makes some people hard and bitter. They refuse to submit to God when the cross is heavy--and grow rebellious.

Thus the experience of trouble always has its perils. The deep waters of sorrow--have their hidden rocks and there is no chart which marks them; those who pass over them need a wise and skillful Pilot. At no time do we need the divine guidance more--than when we are passing through sore trials. The only safe way is to commit ourselves to the will of God and the heavenly guardianship. Then no trouble can harm us. The fiercest storms cannot injure us when we are beneath God's sheltering care.

An experience of change which has its peculiar perils, is when one suddenly passes out of prosperous circumstances, into poverty. Only the other day, a little family entered an experience of this kind. They had been enjoying all the comforts of a beautiful home. Money was abundant. No desire was ungratified. The father was in a successful business. The mother was carefully sheltered and free from care. The only daughter was at school in another city. The father, not content with a good, regular business, tried the stock market--a temptation to whose fascination, many men yield. For a time he was successful and his success lured him on. Failing in some ventures, he invested more, hoping to win back what he had lost, and lost more, until all was gone! The beautiful home had to be given up, pictures and furniture were sold, the daughter was recalled from school and began seeking a job in which she could become a bread-winner. The little family is living in a boarding-house, in pinching and uncongenial circumstances.

All this is pathetic enough--but this is not the worst of it!

Many people are always poor, with experiences of need, self-denial and hardship all their days--and yet live sweetly, beautifully and nobly through it all. They have never known any other condition. The best things in their lives--are the fruits of their privation, their toil, and their pressing need. But all is different with this family. In the past, until now, they had never had a wish denied them. They had always been used to luxury, never finding it necessary to go without anything they desired, and this made it very hard for them to accept the poverty of their new condition. They had been accustomed to a good social position, and that is now gone--they have left their old neighborhood among well-to-do neighbors, and are

staying on a very plain quiet street. People probably just as poor as they are--live all around them and are really quite happy, because they have always been familiar with poverty's cot, and poverty's fare. There is no dishonor in living in such circumstances. God loves the poor, and it may be seen at the last--that poverty has done more for the kingdom of Christ, for human happiness, and for the enriching of the world, than wealth has done!

But with this little family all is different--they have not been used to poverty--and the danger is that they will be hurt in the new experience. Their family life appears to be suffering. They are all discouraged and seem to be less joyous and less affectionate. The mother gives way to her feeling of discontent, and she has not her old cheerfulness, courage and kindness. The father has not proved himself brave and strong--but seems to have succumbed to defeat and goes about like a broken man. The daughter, unused to labor, to responsibility, untrained for work and for endurance, finds it hard to face life as a working girl. She is willing enough, even eager to take up her burden--but she is unprepared for it, and it is not going to be easy for her to get the preparation, since she must begin at once to provide for herself--and also do her share in providing for her family.

It is evident that there are dangers in this experience for this young girl, as well as for the others of the family. It will not be easy for her to pass through it, without losing something of the beauty, the gentleness, the simplicity, the charm of her life. The burden is too heavy for her young shoulders. The roughness of the world may hurt the bloom of her life, and rob her of something of the brightness of girlhood. It is a serious loss to her--to have to give up her school life to become a bread-winner. It seems to be too great a sacrifice for her to be required to make. There is danger that she may lose heart, that her spirit may be broken and her life irreparably hurt.

The problem of passing through a change like this, is a very serious one. There is great danger that harm shall result. It is possible, however, to meet the experience successfully. Burdens, if accepted cheerfully and borne heroically, become a help--not a hindrance. The trials of life all have in them their opportunity for learning new lessons, gaining new strength, reaching new heights.

The effects upon us of the changes through which we pass, depend upon ourselves. All life is meant to be disciplinary--it is God's intention that each event and experience shall make us better, more beautiful in character, fitter for the work of life. We are always at school. It is not the divine will, that anything that comes into our life shall do us harm, shall spoil our life, or prove a hindrance to our real progress. Flowers grow under the snow in the late winter, unhurt by the cold and the ice. The beautiful things of love should be kept gentle and lovely, under the shelter of divine love, through even the hardest experiences. If only we meet the experiences of life as we may, however severe they may be in their natural consequences, they may be made into blessing and good. We need only to keep ourselves in the love of God--and then no harm of any kind can come to us.

There is no joy like the divinely joyful sorrow, as there is no strength like the divinely strengthened weakness. Every day brings its changes, its sudden trials and troubles, its losses, its disappointments, oftentimes its tragedies. It is well that we train ourselves to calmness and peace of mind, to self-control, so that we may never be swept away by the surprises of life--and led to do rash and foolish things.

The other day a family was startled to hear without warning that their young son was married a week before, to a girl of his own age. The first effect on all the household was consternation, which quickly passed into anger. Bitter words were spoken and there was danger that deeds of violence would be done,

things for which the family would have grieved afterward. Then was the time when the soft answer that turns away wrath was spoken, and peaceable counsel prevailed. There was danger of the wrecking of the happiness of the two young lives, and the rending of the cordial relations in two families, with the starting of feuds and strifes which would have gone on for years. Happily, however, these perils were avoided.

It is said that when a twig or even the smallest branch of a tree is bruised, all the tree begins to send of its life to heal the wound. Thus it was in these two homes. The folly of a hasty marriage was condoned and all the influence of the two families brought to bear to make the best of it. The young people were given every opportunity not only to be happy--but also to hold their place of love in the hearts of their respective households. There may still be regret at the hastiness of the marriage--but forgiveness will be full and complete, and unless further mistakes are made, all will go on happily.

The real problem of life, is not to avoid hard and unpleasant experiences, surprises of sorrow, trying things, vicissitudes in circumstances--but in whatever changes or trials that may come--to be divinely led, preserved from mistakes and follies, guarded from evil in every form, and brought into better, more beautiful life. Thus the changes that come, will prove to be part of God's plan for our lives.

The incidents of the common days will become links in the chain of providence. When we put our perplexing circumstances, whatever they are, into the hands of God, to be untangled by him and then ordered and directed in his wise way of love--we have nothing to do in the matter, but our simple duty. We must keep our own hands off the tangles, believing that in God's own good time and in his own way--he will bring about blessing, beauty and good.

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