

Depart From Me, I Never Knew You - Part 2

by Ralph Mahoney

Ralph Mahoney emphasizes the importance of seeking God as our ultimate reward and understanding the role of trials in discerning our calling and election in Him.

Duration: 43:26

Scripture: Genesis 15:1, Nehemiah 9:7-8, Matthew 6:33, Philippians 3:15, Hebrews 3:2, Revelation 14:13

Topics: "Knowing God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker references Genesis chapter 15 verse 1, where the Lord appeared to Abram and declared Himself as Abram's shield and reward. The speaker emphasizes the importance of divine wisdom and revelation in knowing when to resist and when to submit to the encroachments of Satan. The sermon also highlights the tests and trials that God allows in our lives to humble us and test our obedience to His commandments. The speaker encourages leaders in the church to continually seek and listen to the present word of the Lord for their spiritual nourishment and the growth of their churches.

Transcript

Before we go on today, I need to just make reference to one last Scripture verse, and that's Genesis chapter 15, verse 1. And it was here that the Lord appeared to Abram. I think this was perhaps the third appearance of the Lord to him. Perhaps the fourth.

I should go back and check, I suppose. But in this appearance of the Lord, the Lord said to him, I am thy shield and thy exceedingly great reward. This statement of the Lord to Abram at this time in his life was very significant because in the previous chapter he had taken one of the greatest steps of faith a leader ever has to take.

And I think at some time in our life, God gives every one of us this choice. Perhaps you've had that choice already presented to you. Perhaps you passed the test.

Perhaps you failed. I don't know. God alone knows.

I'm sure if you failed, he gives you another chance. In most cases, I think he gives us multiple opportunities to make the right choice because of our propensity to failure when he presents this opportunity. The problem with God's opportunity is that they come disguised, and only faith rips away the opportunity to see what we're really being faced with in the choice.

In this case, the choice was whether Abraham would trust God alone to be the one who blessed him and provided for him, or whether he would enter into league with others and lean upon them to be part of his support base. One of the critical issues we all face is who we're going to belong to. To whom do you belong? Who owns you? In Acts chapter 8, there was a certain sorcerer who sought to own Peter and offered him money, Peter and John, for the gift.

Their response was, I hope, one that you'll always have the courage to say, Thy money perish with thee. You who work in pastoral ministry have that temptation, I'm sure, presented you constantly by sometimes affluent members, sometimes some that aren't so affluent, who want to purchase favor. You're always faced with the decision, What am I going to do? In this case, the king of Sodom wanted to give to Abraham the spoils of a war he had gone out and helped win.

In fact, without what he did, the war would have been lost. And yet, when it came time to divide the spoils, Abraham lifted up his hand to the Lord God, the possessor of heaven and earth, and he understood that, who owned it all. And he said, I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet.

I won't even take shoestrings from you, nor anything that is thine, lest thou shouldst say I have made Abraham rich. And after he had made that choice to lean wholly on God as his provider and be only God's man, and not let anyone manipulate him with money, that God appears to him and says, Abraham, I am your exceeding great reward. I'm what you're going to get for serving me.

I don't think that was a disappointment to Abraham, because that's who he was seeking, God. The Bible says in Hebrews 11, verse 6, He's a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. And what's the reward? Him.

He rewards you with himself if you diligently seek him. And the Lord said to Abraham, I am thy exceeding great reward. More than anything else, that's what I want now and in eternity is the Lord.

Amen. I want him. And I hope that with that understanding you'll begin to pursue him, seek him.

Then we have the glorious promise of Correction, Romans 8, where Paul says, How shall the Father not with him freely give us all things? And one of the terrible focuses that has been generated in our nation is the focus on things. Use your faith to get things, name it and claim it, and all this business. And the Lord just says, Seek first what? The kingdom of God and his righteousness, and what? All these things will I add.

He never told us to seek the things or to name and claim the things. If you're going to use your faith to name and claim, name and claim spiritual realities, spiritual priorities, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and he will take care of the things. And once that focus is right in your life, you don't have to worry about the things, because the Lord will take care of them.

And if you read Deuteronomy 28, you'll see that Moses made it very clear that if we would walk in his law and keep his commandments, the Lord said, All these blessings shall come upon you, and what? Overtake you. You don't have to seek them. You don't have to go out after them.

You don't have to make them the focus of your life. You can't help it. They will overtake you, and they will come upon you.

And I hope you will do that and teach your people to do that, and focus them on the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Focus them on him and establishing a relationship with him, and he will take care of the things. They that are with him, oh, that's the prize, being with him.

Paul's words in Philippians 3, verse 15, that I might know him, the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto thee, literally, the out resurrection. So let that be your goal today, to be with him. They that are with him are called and chosen and faithful.

I want to talk about those three things in the concluding time we have here this afternoon. Called, chosen, and faithful. They that are with him are called, are chosen, are faithful.

We all know the words of Jesus in John 13, You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain. We are not those who discovered him or found him. In reality, we are those who were found by him.

He sought us out as that ninety and left the ninety and nine in the fold and went out to where we were and found us. Thank God that he did. We are called.

So the Bible says in Matthew 20, verse 16, and you'll find it also in Matthew 22 and verse 14, everyone knows the verse, many are called and what? Few are chosen. One little Sunday school girl said it one day in one of my classes. Many are called and a few are frozen.

Many are called, few are chosen. I think all of you would recognize today that you are called of God or you wouldn't be in this room. You are in the ministry because God calls you.

Paul writes in his letter in Hebrews that no man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Moses. So we are called into the work and ministry and the thing that God has put upon our life to do. But the Bible says many are called.

Many are called, but few are chosen. And I'm concerned today that you enter into some understanding between the distinctive between being called of God and chosen of God. What is the separating line between those two stages of progression in our spiritual development and maturity and in the lives of our flocks? Well, when we go back to Isaiah chapter 48 and verse 10, I believe the prophet gives us some real insight into the distinctives between the called and the chosen.

When you read Isaiah 48 and 10, it says, Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver. Silver in the context of this passage is that which is blessing and increase and so on to our lives. And the Lord says, I have refined thee, but not with silver.

I have chosen thee, where? In the furnace of affliction. Where does God make his choice? He chooses every one of his servants in the furnace of affliction. Now that means if you're going to be chosen of God, there's a furnace of affliction that's coming to your life if you haven't already been in it.

I suspect most of you have made a few trips through it already and probably more than you would want to make. Many of you, no doubt, sitting here are like Moses and Elijah, and I must confess that all I'm saying today I'm preaching to Ralph Mahoney. But you would remember that both Moses and Elijah, who I have to believe are undoubtedly the two greatest prophetic ministries of the Old Testament, I believe that because they are the ones that appeared with him on the Mount of Transfiguration.

That appears to be God's validation that they were the greatest. They are also the only two of whose ministries it was prophesied their anointing and mantle and ministry would be repeated in other people's lives in later generations. There would be a repetition of that anointing that was upon them, and their prophetic ministries would be replicated in later generations.

Deuteronomy 18 contains Moses' own words, "...the Lord thy God shall raise up unto thee a prophet like unto me. Him shall ye hear, and all that he shall say unto you." While we know that that had its fulfillment in our Lord Jesus Christ, it awaits a fulfillment that we read about in the book of Revelation. That fulfillment is subject to some understanding and interpretation, which I won't make today, but the fact is that ministry of Moses was prophesied to be repeated.

So when John came, we find in the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 22, the people coming to John the Baptist and saying, "...Art thou that prophet?" What prophet? The one Moses said would come. "...The Lord thy God shall raise up unto thee a prophet like unto me. Him shall ye hear." John's response was, "...No, I am not that prophet." Secondly, "...Are you Elijah?" Why did they ask him that? Well, Malachi had said in chapter 4, the last two verses of the Old Testament, "...The Lord your God will send unto you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord." So they asked him, "...Are you Elijah?" Which was for to come.

And again, what did he answer? "...No, I am not." And so they said, "...Who are you?" And he said, "...Well, I am just the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, as also said Isaiah." It's interesting that John didn't know who he was. Because when you read Matthew chapter 17, the transfiguration record, where Moses and Elijah appear on the Mount with Jesus, and after it's over, the disciples ask Jesus about this vision because Jesus had told them this is a picture that I'm giving you of my kingdom coming in power.

And when it was all over, they said, he said, "...Don't tell the vision to anybody." And they said, "...Well, Lord, if this is a vision of your kingdom coming in power that we've just seen, why do the Pharisees say Elijah must first come?" What was Jesus' response? "...Elijah truly shall first come," pointing to a future time when that would happen again. But I say unto you, Elijah has come already, and they knew him not, and then the disciples understood that he spoke to them of John. So John didn't know who he was, but Jesus did.

And I only throw this little aside to you for your ministry today. You don't need to know who you are either. Just go do the will of God.

And don't worry about whether you're an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher. Just go do it. And don't let people start hanging titles on you.

These words I've just said were not titles in the New Testament to begin with. They were job descriptions, like carpenter, electrician, plumber, etc. They just described a function and an unction that God gave to men.

And go do it, and don't worry about it. Fulfill the will of God. John didn't know who he was.

Jesus did, but he fulfilled a ministry he didn't even know he was. But coming back to the point we're dealing with here in Isaiah 48, he chooses us in the furnace of affliction. I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

I was going to say about Elijah and Moses, and it relates to this very, very passage, that at the height of their ministry, both of them, at the pinnacle of their ministry, prayed for God to kill them. Boy, doesn't that want to make you an anointed leader? Moses in Exodus 32, Elijah in 1 Kings 18. The very high point of their ministry, they're both asking God to strike them dead and take them to heaven.

They don't want any more. Well, some of you, no doubt, have prayed the same thing. Anybody honest enough to acknowledge that with me you've prayed for the Lord to take you home? You haven't prayed that? Man, you've been exempted from a lot of trials, tribulations, and furnaces.

I tell you, when God heats up his furnace on your life, you're ready to go to heaven. You'd just as soon get out of this earth. I did.

I would. But many times when I would have rather gone to heaven than stayed on earth. That's where he makes his choice, though, when he gets us in the furnace.

I've chosen thee in the furnace. Now, one of the things that we refuse to acknowledge, for the most part, in the Church and Western nations, is the gospel of suffering. We do everything in the world to escape it ourselves, and I think we should.

I'm sure not here teaching you a course on masochism. I don't want it, and I try to stay away from it, but despite my best efforts, it comes. Why? God, in his mercy, sends it to me.

I need it, he does it. But he brings these furnaces of affliction along into our lives. Now, we don't like to teach our people that.

When they've got a problem, we immediately try to pray them out of it. And it might be appropriate to pray them out of some of their problems. The fact is that we really need revelation on why people are in their problems, so we pray the right prayer.

Romans 8.26 says, We don't know how and we don't know what to pray for as we ought. I use both words because, depending on which translation you look up, you'll find both those words, and they're apparently both implied there in the Greek. We don't know what to pray, we don't know how to pray.

Unfortunately, we want to promise our people Blue Cross, Blue Shield, American Express and heaven with a mansion and a crown and a harp after that's all over. And no problems, no trials, no tests, no persecution, no suffering, nothing in this life that will in any way make it the least bit unpleasant. Well, I just wish your gospel worked, because as you well know, it doesn't work in the real world of human beings.

And it doesn't happen that way for anybody. Everybody has them, and many of them are satanic attacks and many of them are divine disciplines. And we need revelation to know the difference.

We need to know by the Holy Spirit's action upon us where people are and why they're there and need to know how to yield to the Holy Spirit's action in prayer so we pray the right prayer for the situation people are in. One safe little principle is given us by James in his epistle. He tells us when we're in trouble, the first thing we should do is submit to God.

In every furnace of affliction, that should be our first response, submitting to God. Submit to God. Then he says, resist the devil.

Submit to God first, because God may be in it. Now he makes his choice by our response in the furnace of affliction. Psalm 11, verse 5, says, The Lord trieth the righteous.

The Lord tries the righteous. Why is he trying us? Well, we're going to find out in a moment. The psalmist also said, I think it's in 142, verse 3, let me just check that reference to be sure I'm giving you the address and not just the neighborhood.

David says here, When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. No man cared for my soul. David is describing his own experience after the anointing.

Why was his spirit overwhelmed within him? Well, like Joseph, like Moses, like every man and woman anointed of God. After God's word comes to you and calls you, God tests and purifies the word. Let me just run you through that real quickly.

First of all, look with me in Proverbs, if you will. Proverbs, chapter 30, verse 5. King James Version says, Every word of God is pure. As you well know, the Hebrew is every word of God is purified, purified.

When God speaks to you and puts his call upon your life and brings revelation to you concerning ministry and what he's ordained for you to be and to do, then that word is purified. How is it purified? Well, if you go back to Psalm 12 and verse 6, it says this, The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tested in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Perhaps I can put it in a more practical context so you'll understand what it means to have the word of the Lord tried.

In the book, The Making of a Leader, I dedicate one chapter to Joseph. And I do so because for reasons beyond my understanding and knowledge, somehow my life was bound up in the life of Joseph. Somehow in the realm of the Holy Spirit, there was in Joseph's life a model that my life was to follow.

And even as a very young child, immediately after finding the Lord, I first met the Lord when I was five years old in Mesa, Arizona. And then in subsequent visitations of God to my life, when I walked away from the Lord and rebelled against the Lord as a teenager. But after I made a recommitment when I was 15 of my life to the Lord, I would read those chapters in the book of Genesis concerning Joseph without knowledge or understanding what it was all about.

But every time I'd read that story, I couldn't help it, something would come over me and I would just break and weep and weep and weep, and sometimes for hours. I never understood it until later years. But I know in retrospect it was because I was going to be walking the same path Joseph walked.

And God was trying to give me an allegory and an analogy that I could reference during those days of testing and trial that would help me through them. But I didn't have the good sense to know that. But Joseph's life started, his trouble started when at age 17, God visited him and revealed to him his calling.

You remember his dreams and his visions, and you remember that the moment he shared them, it did not meet with the glad reception that he expected. His brethren were immediately disdainful of him, and his own father and mother were upset with him. You mean to say that we're going to bow down to you, Joseph? But his brothers didn't even receive it with a laugh.

They received it with a vengeance, and they set out, as you know, to get him. The first thing he found out after his revelation and his call is that his brothers were discussing his death, and he was in a pit listening to how they were going to kill him. The next thing, they brought him up and put him on the back of some

camels, and some slave traders bought him, and off he went to Egypt and onto the auction block and into the house of Potiphar.

The next promotion he got was being falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and ending up in the prison. And he stayed there the better part of the next thirteen years, bound in chains. And I want to tell you, Egyptian prisons aren't very pleasant places to spend thirteen years of your life.

I happened to be in one for just a few hours a few years ago, and that was enough for me. Not because I had done anything wrong, but the Egyptians had just been defeated in a six-day war that had humiliated them, and they felt the Americans were responsible, and I was an American that showed up at appropriate times. But without belaboring that incident, the point is that this was a horrible situation.

The filth, the human excrement, the fleas, the rats, the darkness, the irons in the shackles that were upon him. And when you read the account in the book of Psalms, Psalm 105 and Psalm 106, which recount much of Joseph's story, the Hebrew is very interesting in that it says that the iron entered into his soul. He died inside, no longer capable of emotional response, because thirteen years he thought back to a dream and a vision God had given him, and what tried him.

The 105th Psalm says, Until the time that his word came to be fulfilled, the word of the Lord tried him. The greatest trial in your life is what God has spoken to you that is frustrated in its fulfillment. Everything has gone wrong and backward after God spoke, and you thought it was going to happen tomorrow.

One year passes, two years passes, three years passes. For Joseph it was a countdown of thirteen years, and he didn't ever expect it to end, because God hadn't promised him by revelation that it would be thirteen years. He thought it was a false vision, and that's the place he came to.

Now, the Bible says that he chooses us in the furnace of affliction. What's the basis of his choice? It's how we respond when we're in the furnace. The interesting thing about Joseph is that his gift kept operating even in the prison.

Do you remember that? He kept his relationship somehow alive with the Lord, so he was able to tell the butler and the baker what was going to happen, and that the keeping alive of the gift, even in the furnace times, was his eventual point of deliverance. He never abandoned his gift and his ministry. He kept it alive, and it was his eventual deliverance.

He was chosen because in the furnace of affliction he kept alive somehow, despite it all, his relationship with God. While I don't have time here today to take Joseph's life apart, I could spend, I suppose, a week on his life, because it was so meaningful to me, and all the dimensions of his hurt and God's ultimate healing of his emotions and memory, and all the things that were involved in Joseph's restoration, so that when those brothers whom he should have had killed and slain by any measure of the life and society he lived in in his time, instead he weeps when he sees them. Those who had subjected him to all those years of suffering, and reaches out in love and compassion to embrace them and ultimately bless them.

And it's a miracle story of a man who went through the furnace of affliction and was chosen in the midst of it. And Joseph, for a correction, Moses' life, receiving the call. Read Acts 7 if you want an understanding of his life, because the New Testament sheds more light on his call than the old.

When he goes out to his brethren to deliver them, Acts 7 says, he assumed that they would understand how that God, by his hand, would deliver them. But they understood not. In an attempt to deliver his

brethren, fulfill the call and the revelation that was burning in his heart, to free this slave people, and that was his manifest destiny.

And he knew it. And he went out to do it, but unfortunately he didn't wait for God's time. And he went out in the strength of his own might and his own power to do it, and killed an Egyptian and forty years on the backside of the desert, until all the learning of the Egyptians was taken out.

And he didn't come out the silver-tongued orator that he went in, trained as a prince of Egypt to lead that nation and probably be its next pharaoh, no doubt having stood before its parliaments and spoken out on political issues and having been trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, he no doubt went into the desert an eloquent orator and a majestic man, but he comes out broken and old and stuttering and stammering and can't even speak for himself anymore. And even under divine edict refuses to do so until God gives him errand to speak on his behalf. And it was with that broken man who was chosen in the furnace of affliction that God delivers a nation.

And I could go on to recount David's experience, who after the anointing came upon him as a young lad of sixteen years of age. As you well know, David experienced three anointings in his lifetime, and every one of them were followed by severe tests and trials. After he went out after the first anointing and slew Goliath, then he becomes a hunted, hounded young man that has to flee to the wilderness for his life, a man whom King Saul sent his army in perpetual and continual search of to destroy, and who had to live in caves in the wilderness and survive by hook, by crook, and by trust in God.

And it was there that he learns a relationship with the Lord, that the Lord was his refuge and strength, a help in time of trouble. And it was there that he has to learn to await God's time of promotion and appointment. When he has the opportunity to kill his enemy, he won't touch the Lord's anointed.

And all the lessons David learned as he was thrown into the furnace of affliction, and he went through them over and over. But the Bible says he was chosen. We are chosen in that furnace.

It's interesting when we go back to the book of Numbers, chapter 14, we find that the children of Israel were subjected to ten tests in the wilderness. And I don't have time to go through those ten tests with you today, but I'll just tell you they got a perfect score. They failed every one of them.

But why did they go through that wilderness, and why were the tests of the wilderness so severe? Well, when we come to the book of Deuteronomy, and I'd like to look at a passage there today, and if my memory serves me right, it's in the eighth chapter, but let's just take a quick look to be sure. Deuteronomy chapter 8, we have this interesting word that starts along about verse 2. Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness. For what purpose? To humble thee, to test thee, to know what was in thine heart.

Whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or not. And God prepared ten tests in the wilderness to test, to humble, to know what was in their heart, to know whether they would keep his commandments or not. And verse 3 says, He humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger.

He fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth. That is a present continuous operation. Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

And let me tell you today who are leaders in the Church, the only way you will live and your Church will live is on a continual diet of hearing his present word. We don't live by what he said. We live by what he is saying.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds and continues to proceed. Proceedeth, present continuous tense, an operation out of the mouth of God. Let him that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit sayeth, current, present tense unto the Churches.

And we live and our Churches live as we continue to hear from God and move on in life. But where does that word come to us? How do we learn? How does God make us to know that man doesn't live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God? He makes us learn that out there by taking bread away from us. So we learn we don't live by it.

He takes prosperity away from us, so we learn we don't have to have all those material things to do the will of God. He puts us into tough times to know that we don't need all the trappings we think we do to do the will of God. And we find out that what we ultimately need is only one thing, the preceding word of God.

The devil comes to Jesus after forty days and nights of fasting and says, Look, here's stone. Turn it to bread. Satisfy your need.

And he was hungry, the Bible says. But what was Jesus' answer? I don't live by bread, and I don't respond to my own hunger. I live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth to me.

God hasn't spoken to me and told me to turn stones to bread. Unfortunately, many of us in our points of need and the point of need in the lives of our people are going ahead and turning stones to bread. And sometimes our doing so can be the enemy's motivation and push on our lives, not God's word.

And that's a sobering word, but one I hope that some of you can sort out and understand. As you go on through this chapter, it goes on to say in verse 15, Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness wherein were fiery serpents, scorpions, and drought, where there was no water? God led them through it. Oh, God doesn't lead us into trials and tests.

Well, he led these people in. He fed them in the wilderness with manna, and thy fathers knew not that he might humble thee, that he might test thee, and then here is, of course, the beauty, to do thee good at thy latter end. To do thee good at thy latter end.

And it is a God who will eventually work all things together for good to them that love him. But if we don't learn to love him in the tests, in the trials, in the furnaces of affliction, we are not chosen. He chose them in the fiery furnace of affliction.

I don't want to press this point too hard. I might warp you into an imbalance, but I've yet to hear a real good sermon in the United States of America on faith for destitution, faith for caves and dens of the earth, faith for being sawn asunder by the sword, faith for being destitute, afflicted, tormented. And yet all of those things of trial, of cruel mockings and scourgings and bonds and imprisonments and stoning and wandering about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.

Who is that said of? People who refuse deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Who is that said of? A bunch of unbelieving, disobedient servants who didn't have faith to appropriate what kings' kids ought to get anywhere they go, glory to God. Is that who it's said of? It says of that holy company of

whom the world was not worthy.

That's the only group it says it of in the Bible. The world wasn't worthy of them. They wandered in deserts, mountains, dens, caves of the earth.

Were they unbelieving? No. Verse 39 of Hebrews 11 says, These, all having received witness through faith, died in faith and received not the promise. Our concepts of faith surely need an overhaul.

Faith in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, which I would commend to your memorization. God dealt with me when I was 16 years old about memorizing this chapter, and I'm glad I did. But this whole chapter is men and women who, through faith, walked out life through the most difficult times of torment and persecution and want and famine and destitution and hunger and all the rest, and it was all by faith.

And while I don't take away from some of the good, wonderful revelations of faith God has blessed us with in America, I say our application of it is woefully inadequate and woefully lacking. And I'm not hitting out at any body, I'm hitting out at the way it's being applied and taught. And we're leading our people astray, and hence they are many called and very few being chosen.

Because no one wants to walk the path of suffering to the place of being chosen, but they that are with him are called and chosen. And lastly, what else? Faithful. Faithful.

Two verses in closing, Nehemiah chapter 9, verse 7 and 8. This is the testimony of Abraham, and the Scripture gives a marvelous testimony concerning Abraham in this passage, Nehemiah chapter 9, verse 7 and 8. Thou art the Lord, the God, who didst choose Abram, and brought him forth out of earth the Chaldeans, and gave him the name Abraham, and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him. And then over in Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 2 of Moses, Paul writes again, and he applies this to both Moses and Jesus, who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also was Moses, who was faithful in all his house. I guess what we all should be working toward, if we're not, and hoping for, is those final words of Jesus, Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

The Lord didn't ask whether we prospered or didn't. He didn't ask whether we succeeded or we didn't. But he does commend our faithfulness.

Thou good and faithful servant. They that are with him are called and chosen and faithful, chosen in the furnace of affliction. And I would suggest today, if you're in one, submit yourself to God.

Whenever Job had everything he owned stripped away in one day, the last verse of chapter 1 says he fell on his face and worshiped. The Lord did him good in the latter end, though, didn't he? And he restored back twice as much as he had before. And that's the other side of the coin, usually.

It will be either in this life or the one to come, and it doesn't matter which, actually. But I will just tell you that before every enlargement in your life, it will be preceded by a valley of a shadow of death. So that you will say, like Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5, Death worketh in me, that life might work in you.

And I believe there is a reciprocal relationship between the depth of the trial and test and the dimension of the glory and blessing God releases through our ministry in life. Those two things are more or less equal. The more you suffer, the more you bless.

The more you experience pain, the more you relieve pain in others. It was the Apostle Paul, you remember, who was given a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him. Surely he should have rebuked the devil and it flee from him.

But he says, For this thing besought I the Lord three times, that it might depart from me. 2 Corinthians 12. But after seeking the Lord three times, the Lord said, Paul, my grace is sufficient for you.

I'm not going to lift this off your life. I'm not going to relieve whatever that messenger of Satan was doing to him. I'm not going to take it away.

And Paul learned his grace was sufficient, not to be delivered from it, but to go through it and to endure it. Now why did the Lord allow that to happen? He allowed it to happen to save Paul. And I would say to you today, more than what you do for God, God loves you more than what you do for him.

You're more important to him than what you get done. And the point of the story is that when you're anointed of God, as was Joseph, as was Moses, as was David, as was, you know, you name it, anyone that experienced the anointing, if they were not thrown into times of grave trial and severe testing, they were destroyed by the anointing. The anointing destroyed more men and women than lived through it to come out faithful.

Most fail under the impact of the anointing. When God puts a supernatural dimension of anointing on your life and suddenly you're thrust into usefulness, prominence begin to come, then the very things that Moses warned about and God warned about in Deuteronomy 8 start happening. We begin getting lifted up in ourselves.

We think our own might and our own power has done it. We begin to believe our press reports. We see ourselves as minor deities, and all of a sudden we're set up for the fall.

And I know that if you've walked with the Lord many years, or any years, you see the casualties along both sides of the path of life. Men and women powerfully anointed of God, but who in the process didn't have a messenger of Satan to buffet them, and thus became victims of the anointing. Paul said the reason he had it, again 2 Corinthians 12, is because of the abundance of revelation given unto me.

There was given me the messenger of Satan to buffet me, the thorn in the flesh. Because of the abundance of revelation, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, knowledge puffs up. Because of all the revelation and knowledge God gave him, what was the impact upon him? To be puffed up.

What was God's mercy to him? To puncture his balloon. That's why the thorn in the flesh was there, to constantly deflate the ego. Some of you today here are wrestling with some very difficult circumstances in your life.

But you should ask the Lord, God, is this your mercy to me, or is this the devil I should resist, or God I should submit to? And I think he'll answer that question if you ask him. Now I know there are some things in our lives that we should resist and we should throw off, and there are encroachments of Satan that come, but it takes divine wisdom and revelation and hearing the Word of the Lord to know when to resist and when to throw and when to submit. If the foregoing message has been a blessing, we urge you to share it with your pastor, your prayer group, your neighbor, or someone in spiritual need.

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