



The Other Side of Travail

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Chapter 1

A Birthing

In John 16, Jesus sought to comfort His disciples by using the picture of a woman about to give birth. It is from this passage that the title emerges of, "The Other Side of Travail." I could just as easily have titled this message, "The Other Side of Death" -- which of course is resurrection - - but I will stay with, "The Other Side of Travail," because of the picture that Jesus gives in the passage.

A Misguided Expectation

Let's read starting in John 16:20:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you.

Now let's stop right there. Let's get into the environment and the context of these passages. Jesus in this passage is once again telling his disciples that He is going to go away. He has told them plainly in John 16:16 that He is going to the Father. He has told them all through John 14, 15 and 16 that it is essential

that He goes -- because unless He goes -- He cannot come back down and dwell in them by the means of the Holy Spirit. He has also told them that He is going to be betrayed, and that he is going to be crucified and rise three days later from the dead.

Of course, the disciples had no frame of reference whatsoever for these Truths. This was not in Jewish teaching from out of the Old Testament. It should have been. But it wasn't. The Jews, including the disciples of Jesus, expected a Messiah that would physically reign and rule from the temple in Jerusalem. Because the disciples knew that Jesus was that Messiah they expected that this kingdom was going to happen any minute. From them, Jesus was going to kick out the Romans take His place in the temple to reign and rule -- and they would be at his right hand.

Jesus had been telling them that their idea of the kingdom was not the Truth. He told them directly that He would be crucified. He also illustrated through parables the true nature of the kingdom of God. In this age it would be a spiritual kingdom -- Jesus would come to dwell IN THEM. But they could not understand Him. Despite His constant teaching to the effect that things were not going to happen the way they thought they did not grasp what He was saying.

As the time of His death and resurrection drew near, Jesus more and more told them that He was going to leave them. That is the context in which He gives this picture of a woman in travail. That

alone gave them cause for sorrow. Jesus was aware that the disciples knew something was going to happen – He had told them He was going to leave them -- but that they did not now exactly WHAT was going to happen. What DID happen was going to blindside them -- and plunge them into a tremendous crisis.

The disciples didn't expect a Messiah that would die. They expected Jesus to reign and rule -- with them at their side. All of their hopes were pinned on this expectation. It was the reason for which they followed Jesus. In fact, they left their lives, and risked their lives, upon this great hope.

The disciples had anchored their limited faith in God in this expectation of the kingdom. But Jesus knew that all of it was going to come crashing down -- and so he wanted to encourage them. And so, He says to them, "Your experience now, and in the next couple of days, can be likened to a woman that is in travail -- that is in great pain because she's delivering a child. But take heart because there's another side to this travail. There's another side to this horrible experience – to this death-like experience that is about to come upon you -- and that other side is not death. The other side of this travail is a birth – it is unto LIFE."

A Woman in Travail

Women that have given birth to children obviously have a first-hand experience of this -- and can relate to this much more than men. There are women that have gone through labor that has lasted as much as 12 hours or more. And while

that woman is in that labor, she does anticipate the birth of this wonderful child. But while she's in the labor she wants it to be over. That's really the case in any season of pain. If we are in a situation that brings pain and suffering -- if we are in a trial -- we are in labor spiritually. And we want it to be over. We want the pain to stop. We want OUT of that situation. It's natural for us to think that way.

Jesus is saying, "I understand that it's natural for you to want to escape suffering. But have in mind that the pain is going to pass -- that there is another side; there is a result; there is a birth through this travail. This birth is LIFE -- this birth is something for which you may not presently even have a frame of reference. But it's a birth that is coming out from your suffering."

Jesus was speaking to them, of course, of the immediate circumstances in which the disciples were about to find themselves -- that of losing their teacher; losing their friend; really of losing their faith in God. They were going to stumble because of their expectation of an immediate, material kingdom. Note that this kingdom wasn't an expectation that was apart from their personal faith in God. No. It WAS their faith in God. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah -- and they were right. But their interpretation of that the WAY in which God was going to bring that kingdom to pass -- they did not have a clue about that. And so when Jesus was betrayed they were plunged into this travail. It was a cataclysmic experience. It was a tremendous crisis point. All of their hopes, all of their

dreams, and all of their faith, was vested in what they THOUGHT God was doing. But it was going to come crashing down.

Have you ever had an experience wherein you really thought God was doing something – and had all of your faith and hopes pinned to that -- only to see it die? Have you ever been exposed as one who had more faith in what you thought God was doing than you did in God himself? This was the error of the disciples. And quite often, it is the same error of many Christians.

Jesus is speaking to the immediate situation of these disciples. But in principle, He is also speaking to the spiritual experiences that believers will go through. I really love this picture that He is giving of a woman in travail -- because we do find it elsewhere in the Bible. Jesus is saying a woman when she is travail has sorrow because of the pain -- because of the suffering -- but when the life is born, she rejoices because she sees it was worth it.

In the Christian life there will be pain and suffering. But if we yield to Christ and pick up our Cross there will be a BIRTH. WE will be born – and will come into a realization of Jesus Christ.

Paul said something similar in Galatians 4:19? He said to the Galatian church – who had lost sight of the living Christ and were living under the law -- He said to them in verse 19 of Galatians 4: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." That phrase, "formed in you," in NT Greek means, "to be inwardly realized and expressed." And so Paul

was in travail until this great birth would take place in the Galatians – he was in travail for them to come into an inward realization of Christ; so that Christ could be inwardly expressed in them and to them.

This was Paul's travail for the Galatian church -- as a woman about to give birth. But of course, each of us will have this same experience if Christ is to be formed in us. Yet even though it requires much travail, pain, and suffering, to get to that point of a birth, when, "the child is born," we will forget the pain because we will see, "the child," and know that it was all worth it. How many understand that if we come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ -- to where we really know Him – that it will set us free? It will change us and adjust us to God -- and we will never see anything the same way again. The BIRTH is THE OTHER SIDE OF TRAVAIL. The other side of travail is LIFE; it is seeing Jesus -- because He is now realized within us.

Chapter 2

I Will Come to You

Jesus had all along been promising the disciples exactly what he summed up in John 16:21 – using the picture of the woman in travail – He had been promising His life in them through the spirit of God. It is also a promise for us. One other place where He made this promise was in John 14. In John 14, Jesus is talking about the promise of the Father – the promise of God sending the spirit of God down to dwell in them. He says in John 14:17: “The spirit of God has been WITH you, but shall be IN you.” Once again He was giving them this promise because He knows that soon He is going to physically leave them, and He wants to comfort them.

In John 14:18, Jesus continues. He tells them that He must soon leave them, but that, “I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.” Note that: He says that HE will come to them even though He is going to the Father. How? He will come to them by the means of the spirit of God that will no longer merely dwell WITH them – but IN THEM. Jesus says that is how He will come to them: He will, through the spirit, dwell IN them.

In verse 19, He goes on to say, “Yet in a little while the world sees me no more.” Why? Because shortly, Jesus will no longer be there physically. Yet He also said, “But you will see Me.” Why? Because He is going to come back to dwell IN THEM by the spirit of God

– and reveal Himself to them in spiritually -- in an INWARD way.

Then Jesus elaborates. He says, "And because (when I come to dwell in you) I live, you shall live also. And at that day, (when I come to dwell in you) you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." Clearly, despite telling them that He is going to leave them physically – and the world will no longer see Him – He is nevertheless giving them the promise that He is going to come to dwell in them via the spirit of God; He is going to dwell in them, and they in Him. He is promising them the reality of, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Now, let's read on because He makes His promise of coming to live in them even more clear – and by extension – it is His promise to live in US. In verse 21, He says, "He that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me, and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him – and will MANIFEST MYSELF TO HIM." So here Jesus is promising that He is going to manifest Himself to his people. But HOW? Well, we don't need to guess because Judas asks him that question. Judas, not Iscariot, asked Him, "HOW is it Lord that you will manifest Yourself unto us - - but not unto the world?"

Now, again – at this point in time, they have no clue as to what, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," means. They have no clue as to what it means for the spirit of God to come down and live IN THEM. That is a foreign thought to them. This is why Judas asks his question, "Why

won't the world see You, but we will be able to see You? They were ALL wondering the same thing. They were puzzled as to what it meant for Him to live IN them by the spirit. They could not understand how they would be able to see Him but the world would not be able to see Him. That is why Judas asked the question, "How will you manifest yourself to us, but not to the world?" In verse 23, Jesus answers:

***If a man love me, he will keep my words:
and my Father will love him, and we will
come unto him, and make our abode with
him.***

So there it is: HOW will Jesus manifest himself to his people, but not to the world? The Father and Jesus will come and make their abode with His people, indeed, IN His people. This again is, "Christ in us, the hope of glory."

The Necessity of Suffering

Back in John 16, Jesus is making several things very clear to them: He is going to leave them. But He will not leave them alone – He will come to dwell in them by the spirit. Yes, they will pass through a time of crisis and suffering. But they will be as a woman in travail – it will be unto life in Him.

They could not grasp these things presently. But He is telling them that if they would hang in there and believe Him despite it all, there will be another side to this travail -- and that other side will be as the birth of a child -- that other side will be the manifestation of Himself IN

THEM. They will be brought into an inward realization of the very Christ with whom they are speaking at that moment.

Jesus' promise of life from out of suffering is a promise both to them and to us. There is ANOTHER SIDE to travail – something that will result from it. And while that other side may not be a change in the circumstances of our trial, that other side will nevertheless involve a change in US. We will experience an inward revelation and realization of the Christ. We may be like a woman in travail for many seasons in our life. But it is all unto this picture of a birth. It is all unto knowing Jesus Christ.

How many understand that even if nothing changes outwardly, that if we see Jesus Christ that everything about us will change -- because it is knowing Him and seeing Him that sets us free? And so this will be a newness of life. We will actually experience what we received when we were born from above.

This is not to minimize suffering. It is REAL. We do have many legitimate hopes and dreams. We do have friends, brethren, and family. Sometimes those we love sin against us and hurt us. Sometimes we get sick. Sometimes we encounter financial trauma. All of these things can get inside of us and torment us. But Jesus is promising a solution that is unlike any human solution. That solution is an inward realization of Himself.

When we were born from above it was all at once and forever. At that point, we ARE a new

creation. But just as a child must spend a lifetime to learn what life is, so must we learn what the new birth carries in Christ. Christianity is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" -- and it is the new birth – it happens once forever the day that Christ joins us to Himself in spirit. But now we must grow, learn, and discover HIM.

Chapter 3 Called to Suffering

Most of the New Testament, certainly after the book of Acts, is a collective teaching of what Christianity IS. In a nutshell, it can be summed up in that way it. It is a written revelation as to what it means to be in Christ, and Christ in us.

Part of this is going to require suffering. Jesus says he guarantees that you have sorrow in the world. We are, in fact, "called to suffer." Peter writes:

For to this you are called: Because Christ suffered for you, leaving an example, that you should follow his steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

Why is suffering necessary? Is it necessary because God just sort of sat down one day and decided that He was not going to let Christianity be, "too easy" -- and so he just sort of mechanically mandated that suffering be part of the package? No. That is silly. The reason that suffering is included in the Christian experience is because of THE NATURE OF THINGS. Everything you are in Adam is contrary to everything that Christ is in you. God has birthed us out of Adam but into Christ. He has delivered us out of the Adam race into Christ. And since the flesh wars against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh -- and both are in us -- then IN US is the battleground for war. It is a battle for our will. It's a battle for our faith.

Suffering is necessary because God MUST bring us to the end of ourselves -- which is equal to Him

showing us the Truth about ourselves. We have to be brought to that point in experience. We have to see we have nothing in ourselves. Only then will we let ourselves go to Him in an abandonment.

Believers must pick up our cross daily – and that experience of losing our life for the sake of Jesus -- in a practical experiential sense – will involve suffering. But as Jesus is trying to tell us through the picture of the woman in travail – we will find Him as our life. We must die in our earthly nature in order to live in Christ. We must lose in order to find. This is the way it is because of the nature of things. That is why suffering is necessary in order to bring us into the fullness of Christ.

A Vital Question

It is at this point that all believers MUST ask themselves a question. It is certainly the question that each of the disciples had to ask themselves -- and every one of them answered in the affirmative, except Judas. Judas did not answer in the affirmative. They said, "Yes," to this question, but he said, "No." So what is the question?

The question is this: Even if all of our hopes and dreams are dashed – hopes and dreams that we thought were of God – even if all of our expectations from the Lord come crashing down – will we go on with Him anyways?

I am not necessarily talking about things that we may have wanted in willful rebellion – although

the question really applies to even those – because even those are things WE want. But if all of our expectations from God, even as a believing Christian -- if all of those -- despite us walking as far as we know it faith and obedience - - if all of them come crashing down, and are brought to nothing, with no hope or sense that they will ever be resurrected – will we, by faith, go on with Jesus Christ? Or will we go on with God only if He does what we think He ought to do?

There are many believers who have walked along in a path that they were convinced was OF GOD. They expected a certain outcome. After all, they prayed about it. They had done their best to believe and obey God. They gathered up Bible verses for an affirmation that their path was God's will. Many even thought that God had directly spoken to them. Some say they had dreams and visions; confirmations through circumstances -- or even and other Christians. They claim to have been given signs and wonders to confirm what they believe was God's word and promise for them. And then the entire thing collapses. It doesn't happen. And there is no sign that it ever will. The thing is dead.

Of course, many will resort to the notion that even if what they hoped is dead, that this is all just a TEST. They believe that God will, "resurrect it." But in many cases, He never does. The thing is dead and it stays that way.

Situations like that are crucial tests of faith. But the test is not whether we believe God will

resurrect that for which you hoped. Rather, the test is whether you and I will go on with God even if He doesn't. Are we able to LET IT GO? Are we able to trust that it is sufficient that God knows the beginning from the end? Are we able to trust that God will not fail to be faithful to us -- even without our continual demands that He be faithful? Are we able to realize that there is a greater purpose of God that can be found in a circumstance, hope, dream, or desire?

So we have to ask that question: If God were to allow our hopes and dreams to die, will we go on with Him? Even if doing so costs us everything? Or will we take the attitude that because God did not give us what we expected that this proves that God is not faithful?

You will remember that Jesus said, "Whoever will lose His life for My sake will find Me as His life." He also said, "Whoever would seek to possess His life for himself will lose it." That is the meaning behind those words. Can we see that when our hopes and dreams are shattered that this is the choice? That it is at that point that we are doing to lose ourselves into the hands of Jesus Christ – or that we will continue to possess ourselves? These are crisis points in the Christian life. It certainly was a huge crisis point in the lives of the disciples of Christ.

Judas was an apostle. He followed Jesus until he figured out that Jesus wasn't going to be the Messiah the way Judas wanted Him to be – and so through betrayal Judas tried to force things. Judas essentially said, "No! I'm not going on with God unless He does what I

want. Jesus MUST set up the kingdom of God NOW.” Judas was so demanding that his way be Jesus’ way that when it all came crashing down he hung himself.

I'm sure all of the other disciples had their doubts. Peter betrayed him. That betrayal arose out of doubt. All of them probably had their trauma and doubts over this terrible situation. But the eleven of them went on with God -- regardless of their kingdom crashing down; regardless of the death of their every hope and dream.

You have to remember that the disciples had pinned all of their hopes and dreams – indeed, they had risked their lives – on the promise of God’s kingdom. They were not hoping for a bad thing. They did not desire for something that was forbidden by the Bible. Rather, they were hoping and expecting the very kingdom promised in scripture, and about which Jesus had continually taught. They knew Jesus was the Messiah – and they were RIGHT. They expected a kingdom – and they were RIGHT. But they did NOT understand the meaning. They did not understand the MEANS. They thought that the death of Jesus was the end of any kingdom. But the death of Jesus was the means of the kingdom. They thought the kingdom was to be a natural one. But it was to be spiritual – beginning with CHRIST IN US. Thus when Jesus was crucified, they were devastated. And that devastation called from them FAITH. They had to answer the question: Despite the disappointment, will I go on with God?

Believers are going to face this same kind of disappointment. The reason is not because God deceives them. No. Read the gospels. Jesus continually told the disciples the Truth about the kingdom, His purpose for coming, and what was going to happen. But they could not understand Him – they were blinded by traditional teaching and by the very desires they hoped to realize. God is also true to us. But we are also liable to be blinded. Thus, the only way in which God can make us to see is by allowing things to take their course. But at the end of that course we will be faced with that choice: Am I wholly for the Lord – to the point where I will be adjusted to His purpose, even though it dashes to pieces my purpose?

How many realize that when God must allow our hopes to be dashed that He is, in fact, guiding us into all Truth? Sure. I've known a lot of folks who have believed that God was doing something or other that fulfilled their desires. They believed and obeyed God to the best of their knowledge. Maybe it cost them to walk in what they thought was the will of God -- only to see the whole thing come crashing down to the ground. Did God betray them by allowing them to be deceived? No. He had to allow them to be deceived in order to expose the error that was IN THEM – the ignorance and the blindness – and thus, bring them into the Truth and realization of Jesus Christ.

Do we want the Truth or not? There are some professing believers who will not go on with God. If following Jesus Christ leads them into disaster – as they would define it – they accuse

God of betraying them and refuse to ever trust Him again. But the problem in that case does not boil down to a need to understand. Rather, it is a need to BELIEVE and TRUST – without being able to understand. This is a difficult thing. It is a hard pill to swallow. But we are dealing with eternal issues that are contrary to earthly and temporal goals and thinking. Each Christian will have to face it.

God is faithful. All of His ways are true. And just as was the case with the disciples, if following Him leads us into heartbreak or disappointment, then we must continue to follow Him – for He is keeping His promise to lead us into the Truth. Look where He led His disciples: Into an inward realization of Himself. The eleven, and Paul, became a foundation upon which the entire body of Christ would be built.

So the question remains: Will I go on with God? Will I believe God, regardless of my own inability to understand? Will I walk by faith, instead of sight? Will I believe Jesus Christ when He says that there is another side of this travail; that there is a resurrection? Will I lose my life into His hands? If I will, He promises that I will find life, light, and Truth. If I will, “hang in there,” by faith, I will discover a revelation of Jesus. Indeed, even if I am never given an explanation that clears up my perplexity, it will be OK -- because I'll see Jesus in a way that enables me to believe.

Chapter 4

In That Day

God may never explain to us why He has allowed certain things. But the answer -- instead of the explanation -- is going to be a knowing of Jesus Christ. That is exactly what Jesus Christ says here in John 16.

Now, let's pick it up here where I left off with verse 21: A woman, when she is in travail, has sorrow because her hour of delivery has come. But as soon as she is delivered of the child, her pain and suffering is ended -- and now she rejoices in the child. In other words, as soon as the whole purpose of her birth pangs comes to pass -- as soon as the whole point of her suffering comes out -- she remembers no more the anguish for joy that a child is born into the world. In other words, now there is a BIRTH.

This picture that Jesus is giving is correspondent to the birth of Christ -- or to a new realization of Christ -- that is, "born in us," through suffering. He says, "Now you have sorrow. But I will see you again -- I will come to dwell in you -- and IN THAT DAY you shall rejoice because you will see Me. And no man can take from you that joy."

Of course, the expression, "in that day," is really referring to the point in our experience when we see Jesus Christ.

Jesus is talking about what I read earlier -- that He will come to them, and dwell in them, and manifest Himself to them. But He also says that

IN THAT DAY that Jesus manifests Himself to them in an inward way – “in that day you shall ask me nothing.”

What is He saying? Jesus is not saying that it's wrong to ask things of God. It is not wrong to ask God WHY, or to inquire of the Lord as to what He wants us to do. That's fine and it's good. We often need to do that -- that we may open ourselves to Him. In fact, He encourages us to ask. He says, “IN THAT DAY you will ask Me nothing. But verily, verily, I say to you, whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, He will give you.”

So it's good and right to ask -- but he is saying that IN THAT DAY that the birth takes place – IN THAT DAY that they are brought into an inward realization of HIM in a new way – IN THAT DAY they will not need to ask Him the same old questions. Why? Because seeing HIM is sufficient. God may go on to explain something about this or that if it suits His purpose for us, but the point is that Jesus Christ in us is sufficient.

If we see Jesus Christ we will know he is sufficient and faithful. We may carry questions and perplexities, and even some hurts and pains, for the rest of our life over certain things that have impacted our soul and our natural man. We may. But if we come into an inward realization of Jesus Christ IT WILL BE OK -- because we will be able to say, “I do not understand -- but I trust the One that does understand. And it is sufficient.”

And so Jesus said, "Verily, verily I say to you, IN THAT DAY you shall ask me nothing but whatsoever you ask the Father in my name He will give to you. So if you have asked nothing in My name, ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." And so He is talking about the fact that when He is revealed in us -- in other words, when we come into a knowledge of Him -- that HE HIMSELF is going to be the answer. How many understand if we know Jesus, and Jesus is the Truth, that knowing Him will answer a whole lot of questions?

But then Jesus goes on to say than from OUT OF that from out of that revelation of Him, and from OUT OF that relationship of knowing Him -- that we are able to ask the Father in His name for things that we need -- and He encourages us to do that. And so we are at perfect liberty to ask God anything that's on our heart. And yet if we know Him we will accept silence as his answer for us -- if that is presently His answer -- and we will nevertheless GO ON WITH GOD.

So again -- the question is: "Will we go on with God?," even if we don't understand; even if we have been hurt; even if He's allowed tragedy; even if He has allowed, "our kingdom" -- whatever that is -- to come crashing down around our ears? May God give us the grace to go on because it is absolutely vital to our spiritual growth in Jesus Christ.

Seeing Christ

I trust that we realize that when I talk about seeing Jesus Christ that I am not talking merely

about learning new doctrine or a new theological interpretation of Scripture. Those things will, of course, come along -- because everything God does is going to be revealed and affirmed in the Bible. But I'm talking about, "knowing Jesus Christ," in the way that the Bible explains it.

Paul, in Ephesians 1, says it this way:

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know... (Eph. 1:17-18)

But then there is also Galatians 4:

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. (Greek meaning: Inwardly realized and expressed.) (Gal. 4:19)

These passages show what it really means to see Jesus and to know Him in a way that we may have never known Him before. This will SET US FREE. Theology and doctrine alone can't set us free. Seeing Jesus will set us free -- and then the theology and the doctrine will absolutely agree.

Well, most of us know the story of Job. Job, through no fault of his own, was plunged into a terrible time of suffering. God had said that Job, "...is good and upright man. He also said to Satan that, "you have incited Me to allow this to come upon him without cause." So there was no thought in the book of Job that Job's time of

suffering was the result of his own sin. No. But Job was not perfect. If he had been perfect, he would not have needed the trial. But he had not sinned. He had not gotten into unbelief at all. God never said he did.

How many know that you and I can be completely obedient; completely faithful to God as much as we know to be -- and still be plunged into troubles? Why? Because God loves us. He must chastise us -- which means to teach us as sons and daughters.

Again -- this gets back to, "the nature of things." It gets back to what MUST happen if you are birthed into a new realm – and what WILL happen if you go on to experience Jesus Christ.

Chapter 5

The Story of Job

Well, in the Old Testament, Job found himself in this situation through no fault of his own. However, this is one question we must address before move on: What if my problem and my suffering IS the result of my sin? What if I have caused it, or if I deserve it? Am I then a lost cause? Is there any point in me asking for help from the Lord?

Now if the reason that you are suffering is because of your own sin or unbelief – absolutely you can turn to God. Give yourself to God. And then how many know that you and all of your suffering is now in His hands? Repent and turn to Jesus Christ. Because in the final analysis, we must ALL lose our lives to Jesus Christ. We must ALL say to God, "Lord, do whatever it takes to get YOUR WILL in me; do whatever it takes to bring to pass what YOU want to bring to pass; do whatever it takes to bring me into an inward realization of Your Son."

The fact is, we are all sinners. We have all been guilty of unbelief. Thus, no matter how we have gotten into our trial – what matters is how we respond to God through it. In the end, it will matter only whether Jesus is revealed in us through it.

In Job 42, we begin to see the reason why God allowed the suffering of Job. We begin to see the outcome of this horrible time of suffering for Job -- and what God was after; what was the purpose. We might say that Job was like a

woman in travail, under great stress, in great pain -- really in every single facet of his life spiritually and physically. It wasn't just that Job lost possessions and his family. It wasn't just that he was covered with boils. All of that was horrible. But the greatest trial of all was that Job's faith in God was shaken. He could not understand how somebody who had obeyed God - - and God said that he had obeyed - he could not understand how a man who obeyed God and believed God could be allowed this kind of suffering. Much of the book of Job is a debate over that issue.

Leading up to Job 42, God had come to Job and begun to reveal himself to Job in that whirlwind. But in Job 42:1, we find that Job answered the Lord. He said, "I know that You can do everything, and that no thought can be withheld from You." And so Job is beginning to understand that God is sovereign -- that God knows what He is doing and doesn't make mistakes.

In the second half of Job 42:3, Job continues. He confesses, "Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not, and things that were too wonderful for me which I really didn't understand; which I knew not." Note that Job is NOT saying, "Therefore have I uttered error." No. He's NOT saying, "Therefore have I uttered falsehoods and heresy about the Lord." No. In fact, God Himself says in Job 42:8, "Job has spoken of Me that which is right." This does not mean that every word Job spoke was perfect. It does not mean that Job understood what he spoke - in fact, Job is confessing that he did NOT understand. But it

does mean that despite all the suffering and despair; despite all of the emotional outbursts and perplexity, that Job rightly represented the nature and character of God. Job held to God's faithfulness despite his inability to see HOW God could be faithful.

Job was confessing that he believed and spoke the Truth – but that what he had believed and uttered was beyond him. Maybe we could say that Job believed right doctrine and true teaching ABOUT God, but is now confessing, "Now that I see God Himself. And because I see God Himself, I now understand that I really didn't know what I was talking about."

How many understand that this is a wonderful place to come to? To come to where you begin to feel this about even your TRUE doctrinal teaching? That as right as it might be, that all of your biblical teaching just pales into insignificance in the light of seeing Jesus Christ? The biblical teaching is essential. It's great and we need to be biblical in our teaching and doctrine. But the Bible is not a person. Teachings are not a person. Indeed, the Bible itself tells us that we must come to see the Person of Jesus Christ. God's purposes are unto that end.

And so Job confesses, "My goodness Lord, I have uttered what I did not understand, and I have spoken things that are too wonderful for me. I really didn't know what I was talking about. In verse 5, Job says, "I've heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye sees you. I therefore repent."

Now, in the latter part of verse 3, and all of verse 5, we are reading the outcome of Job's time of suffering. We are reading the other side of his travail. We are reading that what is born out of his travail is that he now SEES GOD. He sees the living God. No longer has Job merely heard about God through teaching and doctrine. He sees God Himself.

This is exactly what God wants to do for us. He wants to bring us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ; He wants to reveal CHRIST IN US. That will adjust our doctrine. And if our teaching doctored has been false, it will be corrected. But even if our teaching and doctrine have been true, we will see the Person to whom it points.

So here was Job going through this horrible season of suffering. Again and again, he was asking God -- WHY? Why, God? -- why have You allowed this to happen to me? I have obeyed you and I have believed you. Why have you allowed this?"

You will note that God never answered, "I have allowed this because you are a dirty rotten sinner." God never said to Job, "Because you stopped believing in Me." What God essentially DID say to Job was this: "It was precisely because I saw that your heart was toward Me; that in your heart you believed and wanted me -- it was precisely because of that -- that I brought you into this trial. I knew I could bring you to the end of yourself. I saw that you could be trusted with it." (I hope that it is understood

what I mean by that.) Through his suffering, Job did indeed come through to exactly what God wanted him to come through to: Job saw God – he saw God in a way that he never imagined.

Now again – as I noted before -- it doesn't matter whether our trial is the result of our own sin, or our own mistakes. Regardless, we can always repent of our failings and turn to God. For at the end of the day, God's goal for us is still the SAME – it is to bring us into the end of ourselves and into the fullness of Christ. Regardless of where we are, or how we got there, we are nevertheless dealing with the SAME God, the SAME Truth, the SAME Jesus – and the SAME purpose of God in our lives. Thus, our starting point will eventually not matter if God's gets HIS ENDING.

There are a lot of Christian people, and I can identify with this, that when we get into trials and tribulations -- we think that the reason that we are suffering is because we have sinned or broken faith with God. But that may not be the case at all. If God convicts us of sin or unbelief we can repent. If He does not then we really should not torment ourselves over it. For the goal and purpose of God remains the same: That we might surrender to God and come to see Jesus Christ.

There are also many of us who have had family or friends, and even brethren do some terrible things to us. Perhaps we have been betrayed, lied to, deserted, and even molested. Why did these things happen? Because people sin. Because people don't revere God. And we were in their path. God may allow us to be hurt – although I will say that we have no idea how

many times God may have protected us because things never got that far. Regardless, we MUST give ALL of these matters to God. There is simply no explanation that is going to heal us. Only faith in God and a realization of Jesus is going to give us a life that will be victory over these terrible things.

Job asked all of these questions throughout the book of Job. And he never saw the answers to his questions. You never find God explaining to him specifically why he had to suffer. In fact, you don't even read of God explaining it to him after God restored Job. No. But even though Job did not see the answers he sought, he did see something eternally more important than answers: He saw God.

You will note that once Job saw God that he was done asking and arguing and going round and round over his suffering. IN THAT DAY, Job did not ask God any more questions. Rather, it says that Job prayed for his friends. Notice the shift: Job is still suffering. Nothing had changed about the trial of Job. But Job – because he saw God – had changed. He is no longer preoccupied with himself. His attitude is no longer, “Woe is me.” No. Job has seen God. This has set him free to leave himself alone in the hands of God.

Job was set free to such an extent that in Job 42:10 it says that the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. Some people have tried to turn this into a formula -- that if you're in a trial just pray for others and God will end the trial. That's nonsense. If you want to try that go-ahead. It is not going to

work. No. Job was free to pray for his friends because, through faith, he had left himself alone in the hands of God. He had finally come to the end of all his efforts to understand and to please God. Why was he free to do that? Why did he now have the faith to leave himself alone? Because HE SAW GOD. And because he saw God -- he saw the Truth about himself. He could lose himself into God's hands.

Despite all of that Job had suffered, and despite the silence of God, Job said, "Yes, I'm going on with God. I'm going on with God, even though He has not answered me; even though he has not given me the explanations I want. I'm going on of God because now I see God."

That is the other side of travail. That's the birth of the child. That's the Revelation of Christ in us. It is the teaching to New Testament believers revealed in the book of Job. It is exactly where God wants to bring each of His people: Into an inward realization of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 6

Israel at the Red Sea

The Bible is filled with lots of examples of these Truths regarding trials and travail. Job is maybe the primary one. But I want to give another example from Exodus 14. In Exodus 12 we find that God had delivered Israel out of Egypt through the blood of the Passover Lamb. Pharaoh really did let God's people go. Then, starting in Exodus 14:1 – which is after Israel begins to leave Egypt, into the into the wilderness, on the way to the Promised Land, it says:

The Lord spoke unto Moses saying, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea..., " and they did so. (Ex. 14:2, 4)

What we read here is that immediately after leaving Egypt Israel was given specific instructions by God as to where to encamp. God told them exactly where to encamp and scripture records, "and they did so." But God also told them exactly what was going to happen if they obeyed Him:

For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. (Ex. 14:3-4)

And so, Israel -- at the direction of God -- went out and encamped exactly where God told them to camp, and what happened as a result was exactly what God said would happen: Pharaoh pursued them and they were trapped. On three sides they were trapped by the mountains and the Red Sea, and on the fourth side Pharaoh was closing in upon them.

Here we come to yet another important question: How did Israel get into this predicament -- where it looked as if all of them were going to be slain? How did they get into what was an impossible situation? Answer: They got into that predicament by OBEYING GOD.

When Israel came out of Egypt they did not decide to do their own thing. No. God told them were to encamp and they did so -- and it got them into this impossible situation. Understandably, they were afraid. They expressed their doubts. But isn't their reaction nothing more than a mirror of how we react when we find ourselves in trials? Especially if we believe we have gotten into the trial through faith and obedience?

How many also see that it was at the point of this great crisis, that in spite of all their fear, that they were faced with exactly the same question as was Job, and as was the disciples: Will we go on with God regardless of circumstances? Regardless of whether it looks as if He has forsaken us?

When we are trapped and have no way out it is NOT the end. It is the beginning. Now, of course, it is intended to be the end of self. God has allowed it so that we might no longer look to ourselves; so that we might see that there is NOTHING in us. But all of that is unto a new beginning -- a beginning or birth of faith.

Jesus Christ is THE WAY of Escape

Exodus 14 contains God's directions to Israel as to what they must do in this impossible situation. Note that His instructions to them are not a formula as to how to get out of their dilemma, or as to how to beat the Egyptians. No. His instructions are a revelation as to how to believe and trust Him – indeed they are instructions as to how to FIND God in the impossible.

But let's pause for a moment and bring in a great Truth. It is really the same Truth we have been discussing – and that Truth is that Jesus Christ – seeing Him and knowing Him – is God's purpose in any trial. Jesus is God's way of escape, not out of the trial, but He is God's way of escape while we remain in it. If we lose ourselves to Jesus Christ and abandon ourselves to God, we have escaped UNBELIEF, ignorance, and the wiles of the Devil. We have escaped these through HIS LIFE – and through an inward realization of Him. That being the case, NOTHING can take us captive; nothing can destroy us.

There is a common misunderstanding among believers that God's, "way of escape," is a way out of their trial. Thus, folks pray and search for

this way of escape as if God is keeping it a secret, or as if He will not give it to them. But this is error. Whether God actually opens up a way out of our particular trial and suffering – or does not – is a secondary issue. But regardless of that, God's primary purpose is ALWAYS to reveal Christ in us – which is equal to Jesus being revealed as our, "way of escape," all the while we remain in the trial. Once God achieves that IN US, He may deliver us out of the trial that made it possible.

You will note that if we are to find God IN an impossible situation, we are actually going to have to be IN the impossible. If we are to discover Christ as the other side of travail, we must be IN travail. Obviously, there is no birth without birth pangs. Sure. If every time we encountered trouble God gave us an, "escape route," we would never grow to know Christ. We would never have occasion to LOSE our lives so that we could FIND CHRIST. Therefore, when God directs us and we obey, only to end up in a trial, this is actually the faithfulness of God in our spiritual lives.

There is a passage in the Bible to which many of us like to refer when we find ourselves in a trial. This is the most common passage that folks use to try to prove that God always provides a secret way of escape OUT of suffering. But a closer look at the passage sheds another light upon this issue:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above

that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (I Cor. 10:13)

Note the final sentence in this passage: The way of escape is so that we might be able to BEAR the trial. Does that sound like God is promising a way OUT of the trial? No. He is promising a revelation of Christ that will enable us – beyond our own strength – to be able to endure the trial unto God's purpose. In short, Jesus Christ is THE way of escape.

God allows great trial in our lives to first, bring us to the end of ourselves. He must show us the Truth about ourselves, that we are empty, barren, but are filled with self-trust. Trials are intended to bring all of that out. But that is only the means unto His real purpose: That once we are convinced there is nothing in us, that we would turn and put all of our faith in Jesus Christ. That we might lose ourselves to Christ in an utter abandonment. Then HE -- our life in Him; our knowing of Him -- will constitute a very real, "way of escape."

Is this not VICTORY in Jesus Christ? Is it not victory in Jesus Christ for a believer to face contradiction to faith and the lies of the enemy, and yet to stand firm in faith? – while still IN the trial? Absolutely.

God desires to bring us to the END of ourselves – so that we might LOSE ourselves to Jesus Christ. It is the only way in which we can truly FIND God; find Jesus Christ as our life – Jesus as our Way of escape. This is God's purpose in His

people: That we might know Jesus Christ and live from out of Him. God will use the impossible situation to accomplish this purpose in His people.

Now, God DID also deliver Israel out of their physical trial. He did deliver Israel, and He did deliver Job. He may deliver us. But whether He does or not is secondary to whether Christ is revealed IN US through the trial. If He is revealed, then we ARE delivered in an inward way. The outward may follow because we are free.

God's Directions

God's directions to Israel as to how to believe Him – as to how to find Him and His deliverance in the impossible are found in Ex. 14:15. There are four dimensions:

Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.

These directions are really four dimensions of faith. They constitute a complete relinquishment and a losing of yourself into the hands of the Lord by faith.

"Fear NOT -- is the first thing. But if you are, FEARING NOT, then you ARE believing -- and if you ARE believing, then you will STAND STILL in the faithfulness of God. You will refuse to be moved from faith and commitment to Him and His purpose. We do this by telling the Lord, "to do whatever it takes to get His purpose." We can say to Him, "I don't know my way out of this travail. I don't even know why I'm in it. But I am not going to move from believing you. I am going to believe you despite the fact that the, 'Egyptians,' are coming down around my neck. I am going to GO ON with You regardless – I will go on with You by standing still."

How many understand that standing still is just another way, ironically, of saying, "I'm going on with the Lord. I'm not going to run off into my own will. No. I will stand still in His faithfulness – and ask Him to do whatever it takes to get His will in me."

If you read Ephesians 6, there you will find a description of spiritual warfare. The theme is STANDING AGAINST the enemy – by STANDING STILL in the faithfulness and finished work of Jesus Christ. God could never instruct us to stand still in the Lord, or in the power of His might, unless He was speaking of a finished victory. It is the ground of a finished and final victory that makes it possible to stand still – otherwise we would have to fight to WIN the victory; win that ground. No. We are to stand still, by faith, upon the ground of HIS finished victory.

If we fear not by believing Jesus Christ, and stand still in Him, God says we will, "see the salvation of the Lord." But WHO is the salvation of the Lord? It is Jesus Christ. There it is again: HE is the other side of travail. If we fear not and stand still even while in our travail and pain – we will come into an inward revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Lord IS our salvation. Psalms says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom then will I fear?" (Ps. 27:1) Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11) So again -- just as we found with Job, and as Jesus taught in John 16, so we find the same Truth here in Exodus 14: Fear not, stand still, and you will see the salvation of the Lord -- you will see Jesus Christ Himself in a way that you never anticipated.

When we are in the midst of great suffering and travail, it may ring rather hollow to us to be told that Jesus Christ is our way of escape, and that knowing Him is our salvation. Just as Jesus told His disciples, most of us are focused on our pain – on getting out of the trial. God may eventually deliver us. But once we do come to see Jesus Christ we will absolutely know what Jesus was talking about – and we will absolutely agree with Him: Jesus Christ is our salvation. The sufferings of this present time are not to be compared – even during this life – too having Jesus Christ revealed in us.

The Consequences of Unbelief

Now, of course, there are other possibilities. How many understand that if we won't go on with God – if we will not believe Him despite our disappointments and perplexities -- if we won't go on with God by standing still – then we will NOT see Jesus. The child will NOT be born. We will not know Christ in that new and inward way. And perhaps more frightening is the fact that we will be so diminished that we will likely never even realize what we lost through our unbelief.

I know a lot of people that have broken faith and gone their own way – because God would not give them what they wanted, or because God allowed travail to come into their lives. They accuse God in exactly the same way as did Israel: We believed and obeyed You. But now we are in great calamity. Have you led us here only to desert us and allow us to die? We were better off in Egypt.”

For example, I have known folks who got themselves into great religious deception. They sold themselves to a particular religious system or group. It cost them years of their life. Perhaps it cost them their marriage, their family, friends, or even a lot of money. Then they saw the Truth. Some of these people blame God for allowing them to be deceived. They blame Him for what they lost. Rather, they should be thanking Him for showing them the Truth. It is here that they must ask whether they will go on with God – whether they will lose their lives into His hands – or demand to own themselves.

What is the penalty for choosing darkness rather than light? Some punishment from God? No. The penalty for choosing darkness rather than light is that I get darkness – I become dark within myself. I cannot see the Truth. I cannot see Jesus Christ. And if that is the case, then I have no light to guide me in life. All else that I do will be subject to my unbelief. The terrifying part of this is that many in this condition become so hardened in their pride and unbelief that they think they do see. As Jesus warned, "Beware lest the light that is in you be darkness." That is deception. The only deliverance is to come back into the light. Be willing to be exposed. Repent and turn to God.

Moving Forward

We cannot know specifically what will be born out of death and surrender. We can only know that it will be a new realization of Jesus. Will we go on – will we MOVE FORWARD with God -- standing still in His faithfulness, allowing Him to bring us into His great purpose in Christ? This is what is being illustrated at the Red Sea.

So God said to Israel, "Fear not, stand still, and you will see the salvation of the Lord." But then he added, "Move forward." That is a bit humorous, in that if you were an Israelite in that impossible situation, you might be tempted to ask the Lord, "Move forward to WHERE? There is only the Red Sea in front of me."

How many see a principle here: The waters of the Red Sea were a type and shadow of a baptism

into the death of Jesus Christ. Facing the impossible really does show us the Truth about ourselves -- that WE are impossible. Yet that death is not the last word. If by faith we abandon ourselves into the hands of the living God there will be a resurrection – there will be a resurrection or greater release of Jesus Christ IN US.

We see this illustrated in what Jesus said on the cross. He said, "My God, My God, why view forsaken Me? But then, with His last breath He said, "Into Your hands I commit My spirit." He stared death in the face but was surrendering to His Father in that death. He knew that He was depending one hundred percent on God to raise him up. But he believed. And this is what it means to MOVE FORWARD – it means to abandon yourself to God in a baptism unto death. That is our Red Sea.

This principle of life from death in Christ is all through scripture. As noted earlier, it is essential because of, "the nature of things." Thus, it may be dark now, but there is a morning. There may be great anguish now. But in Christ there is a birth; there is another side to travail – a resurrection and life side.

Light in His Life

There is another question here that we need to ask: Why does relinquishment to God -- why does losing your life to Jesus Christ -- result in a greater realization of Christ? Because if you give yourself to Jesus Christ you will decrease and He will increase IN YOU. And He is the Light.

In Matthew 16, where Jesus said that if anyone would lose his life for Jesus' sake, he would find his life in Christ – we find this principle. If you lose yourself to Jesus what you find is Jesus as your life – and all light and Truth is found in Him; in His life. You will be brought into a greater realization of Jesus. Losing yourself to Jesus Christ breaks the spirit of self-possession -- and a spirit of self-possession blinds us to God more than anything else. Thus, losing yourself to Christ really means that you have taken a step out of darkness into the light.

Chapter 7

Encouragement from the New Testament

Now I want to wrap this up with a couple of verses from the New Testament. These are ones that most Christians know because there are ones that are often quoted for encouragement.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Rom. 8:18)

Paul is, of course, drawing a contrast between this age and the next age. In this age we will realize, "Christ in us," and He will be our hope of glory for the next age. But in the next age, Christ in us will no longer be merely our HOPE of glory – but we will be the realization of HIS glory. That's yet to come. There is a certain amount of His glory that we can come to realize in this age – and our sufferings make that possible. But this is just a foretaste. In the next age, there will be a full release of His glory IN US.

Another passage:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (II Cor. 4:17)

Paul knows that travail is a part of life. He knows that we sin and bring consequences upon ourselves. He knows that others sin against us. He knows that bad things happen to good people – if you know what I mean. Certainly all of the above, and more, happened to Paul Himself. But he is trying to tell us WHY God allows it – God allows it because IF – and it is a big “IF” – we will lose it all into God’s hands, even if He does not explain it, that these temporal sufferings will be used by God for eternal purposes. And all of those eternal purposes are going to be built upon the revelation of Jesus Christ that God wants to bring IN US.

When we all finally go to be with the Lord, and we look back on this age, those seasons of great suffering which may have lasted decades for some, will THEN seem as like, “light affliction,” in comparison to what God got out of it IN US. How many understand that when you and I leave this world that all of our suffering and all of our circumstances are going to pass into history? No circumstance or situation – no cause of either suffering or enjoyment can pass through into eternity – all of that is going to be left behind. All that can live forever is what God got in us of Christ through it.

This brings us full circle back to John 16:21, where Jesus gives us the picture of a woman in travail. Pain is real. People do hurt us. We ourselves do make mistakes. Some of them are bad mistakes. And we are going to suffer as Christians – it is the nature of things that we suffer. Jesus understands that it is expected that we react to pain. We want it to stop, and until it

does, our mind will be on it. But He is telling us that the pain is only temporary. But what is BORN out of that suffering is eternal. God wants to reveal Christ in us. And in this age, Christ in us is our HOPE of experiencing HIS glory. Yet in the next age, Christ in us will be our full realization of HIS glory. Jesus says, "You will KNOW that all of the travail had another side – and you will rejoice in the life that was born out from it."