

Trials and Disappointments

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer
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Summary

A.W. Tozer's sermon titled "Trials and Disappointments," explores the concept that all events and circumstances in a Christian's life, including trials, temptations, failures, and disappointments, are from God and part of His divine plan. He draws from biblical examples, such as Rehoboam, Joseph, and Peter, to illustrate how God's hand is present even in adversity, shaping and guiding believers for their ultimate good and His glory. He emphasizes that Christians should view their challenges as opportunities for spiritual growth and trust in God's sovereignty, understanding that even the most painful experiences are orchestrated by God for a greater purpose. Mr. Tozer concludes with the encouragement that what may seem like disappointments are, in fact, God's appointments, meant to bring about His will in the lives of believers.

Message

In the book of 1 Kings, the 12th chapter, in verse 24, Thus saith the Lord to Rehoboam, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Return every man to his house, for this thing is from me." They hearkened therefore to the word of the Lord and returned to depart according to the word of the Lord. Rehoboam was the son of Solomon, and he had become king at the death of his father and had listened to the bad advice of his counselors and had taken certain political action which had alienated a part of the nation from him.

Jeroboam, an ambitious man, had taken part of the nation and had become, or was to become, the king. Rehoboam felt that he wanted to try to stop this by war. But he had just enough ability to hear God left, but he didn't have much. But he had just enough ability left to hear God say, Ye shall not fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Go every man to his house, for this thing is from me. That is, God had told Solomon that his kingdom would be divided. And now Solomon was gone, but God was working out his plan nevertheless, and it was taking place under the eyes of his son.

And his son was going to throw himself in to try to straighten out this tangled skein, and God said, don't you do it, this thing is from me. Now that's the historic circumstance that gave us this beautiful text. And the truth which lies hidden here in the text is one of the most liberating and consoling truths in the entire Bible.

And the thought suggested here is not alone, but it is developed and strengthened throughout the entire Bible, till in the New Testament it shines like a health-giving sun, bringing light and warmth and health to all of us. And it is simply this, we might condense it for our own use and good into these words, that whatever comes to a Christian is from God.

Now you and I know that the natural world is governed by natural laws, and these laws are administered blindly, and from all we know, impartially, so that the sun rises on the just and the unjust, and the rain falls on the good and the bad. Grain and the fruit of harvest come to the man of God and to the man of sin about alike. And sickness and pain visit not only bad people, but good people as well.

There is loss and there is sorrow, and the loss and sorrow come as certainly and as frequently perhaps even, to the Christian as to the sinful man. And even death finally visits the man of God, for it is appointed unto all men once to die. And all the good who have died in generations gone have gone to their death according to the law of cause and effect that governs the natural world.

And it looks as if we were pieces, helpless pieces. You know, this thought has given some sad and beautiful poetry to the world. Man has likened himself to many things. He's likened himself to shadows. We are but shadow shapes that come and go, says one of the poets. We are but shadow shapes, a moving roll of magic shadow shapes that come and go. They've likened themselves to checkers, but helpless pieces of the game God plays upon this checkerboard of night and days.

Now, all this fails to take Christ into consideration, but we are thinking for the moment that there is a natural world filled with people, and that this world is governed by natural laws, and that an observer might well and accurately conclude that mankind is simply a roll of magic shadow shapes that come and go, or each being a checker which is played over the checkerboard of life. And that is accurate, not pessimistic, it is rather realistic.

And if we take our Lord Jesus Christ out of consideration, I do not see how any human being, if he has any realism in his system at all, if he has any mental or fiber or intellectual courage, can deny that we are but checkers to be played, that we are but a football to be kicked, that we are but corks to float and bob around on the moving surface of the water, but thus to be blown through the valleys of this world, and slaves to the law of cause and effect.

But my friends, I have very good news for you this morning. I have the news that a Christian does not fall wholly under this law. A believer has entered a new kingdom, and here all things are different. He may poetically describe himself now as a football, but he may smile wryly when he feels himself being kicked. But he knows that he's being kicked toward a certain goal.

He may still feel that he is a checker being played over a great board, but in this new place in the kingdom of God, he knows that he's not subject to the laws of chance. He knows that the great player in the heaven is playing a game for the glory of God and the good of mankind. He may feel that he is but dust, as the psalmist said that he was, but he knows now that he is being blown gently toward home and heaven and God.

He may feel that he is a cork and bob up and down in depression and boom, and in sickness and health, and in loss and gain, and in sorrow and joy. He may feel himself upon the undulating waves of time, and yet know positively that he's under the watchful

eye of God, and that though he's a cork bobbing on a great surface and couldn't find his way alone, that the Father knows the way and was taking him through.

Now my friends, I was thinking about that song, If I Had My Druthers. Did you ever hear any hillbillies sing, If I Had My Druthers? Of course, as you city people probably don't know, druthers means rather, rather. If I had druthers, I'd rather had druthers. So, we say I had my druthers means what I'd rather have.

So, when the cowboy sings If I Had My Druthers, and twangs his harp or guitar, and puts a lot of tears in his voice, he is giving plaint to that which mankind has always wanted. He's wanted the ability to lay hold of things. And the same poet I quoted a while ago said that, how does it run, oh could you and I with him conspire, and grab this sorry scheme of things entire, and break it down to its component elements, and then put it together again after our heart's desire.

Now I paraphrased it, but that's the way to run. And this is the same plaint that the cowboy wants when he says he wants his druthers. He'd like to have it his way. And when we want things our way, did you ever stop to consider, ladies and gentlemen, what a world we'd be in in 24 hours if God said, now I'm going to give everybody everything he wants. All he has to do is wish and he gets it. We all go back to Anderson's fairy tales, and what a world we'd be in.

Well, Chicago weather, for instance. If it's baseball season, they want it warm. If it's football season, they want it cold. If a church is going to have a picnic, they want it dry. And the people who own lawns want it to rain. The farmer wants the calm, still, hot air to make his crops grow. And the city dweller with the fog and smog wants a wind to carry all the fog and smog away.

So, you'd never find people agreeing. The old man wants it quiet, and the young fellow wants it noisy. The young fellow puts two or three noise makers on his old jalopy and goes down the street sounding like the charge of the last brigade. And the old fellow would want everything set in foam rubber so there wasn't a sound to disturb his tired old ears. You couldn't get together at all for the simple reason we don't know what we want. We only think we do.

The reason we don't know what we want is that we don't know ourselves, we don't know the world around us very well. We don't know the future at all, and we don't know the past except sketchily. And we don't know what's good for us. And so if we had our druthers, it would be one of the worst things that could possibly happen to us because we'd all kill ourselves.

It would be like a three-year-old having his druthers when it comes to the meals. He would fill up on cake and suffer for the rest of the night. And he would never eat anything good, he'd never drink his milk, and he would never go to school when he gets old enough, he would never accept discipline, he would never grow up to be even an average kind of citizen, but he would be a little impossible hellion if he had his druthers. You have to impose discipline and the grown-up who's supposed to know what's good has to tell the youngster what's good for him until he finds out for himself.

Now that's exactly where we are in the kingdom of God. Even though we're Christians and born of the Spirit, we still don't know always what's good for us. So, God has to choose for us. It says in one place that he chooses our inheritance for us. I like that chapter, that verse of the chapter. He chooses our inheritance for us, and he chooses and sends us the things that we ought to have.

Now that doesn't preclude prayer, because the Spirit can tell us what we ought to pray for, and thus we can help shape events by intelligent Spirit-inspired prayer. But if you think of your life in the long sweep of circumstance between the time you were converted till you die or the Lord comes, you'll be glad somebody else is hunting out your inheritance for you, and you're not forced to choose yourself.

And you'll even be glad in the day to come that you didn't get that prayer answered that God refused to answer for you. You'll be glad then, but now you're wondering and worried about it.

Now I have, I think, about seven. If time gets away, I'll shorten it, cut out some. But I want to go to the Bible itself and show you about seven different things, circumstances, that have come to men. And we can write after every one of them, this thing is from me, for this is what God does. He picks out our inheritance, and when we look at it and say, I don't want that, God says, son, this thing is from me, and blessed is the Christian who knows how to accept it.

Now, first, there's temptation. People don't want to be tempted. I get letters, and I get phone calls, and I get people visiting me personally, and they want to know how come. I'm a Christian, and I'm being tempted. How come? And I always feel, though I don't do it, unless I know them very well, but I always feel that I'd like to answer in the language of the young officer who said to the rookie soldier who started to run when the bullets, he said, they're shooting at me. And the young officer said, what do you think you're out here for?

And so, when a Christian comes and says, why, pastor, I'm being tempted, I feel like saying, well, son, you're a soldier now, you're a big boy, and what do you think you're here for, if it isn't to get shot at? But notice, when our Lord was tempted in the wilderness, He was tempted cruelly, and His temptations were real, regardless of what some theologians may say, they were real and valid. And He was tempted there by the will of God, for two reasons that I know, that He might be perfected for His life work and learn obedience by the things that He suffered, and the second being that He might force approval, unwilling testimony even from hell itself.

For don't think that Satan, when he gave up his, our Lord, his master, our Lord, when he gave Him up and found he couldn't get Him to sin and sulked away into his cave, don't you think the story of it didn't go throughout all the nether regions, and that Jesus Christ was proof against the temptations of the devil, caused that same devil to lose face, and caused hell to shudder to her foundations? How else could God thus have given a testimony of hell and earth to Jesus if it had not been in temptation.

But when our Lord went forty days hungry and was in great anguish of body, and now weariness of mind, and was tempted so bitterly, don't you think His human heart might

have said, why must this happen to Me? And if it had, God's answer would have been, this thing is from me. I've allowed this to come to you, you're not alone, I've been with you, and you're being tempted in My will.

Now that ought to encourage anybody, and if you're being tempted, let me say to you as a company what I couldn't possibly say one at a time, there'd be too many, that if you're being tempted, cruelly even, and bitterly tempted, don't let it get you down. They don't tempt dead men.

I remember the colored brother who was hunting with his boss, and they were in a boat, and the colored man was a real Christian, and yet he was in trouble all the time. Something was always going wrong. His wife was ill, or his children, and they broke a leg, his cow died, something was always wrong, and the man, the white man with whom he was hunting, or with whom he was fishing in this instance, they were in a boat together, and they were hunting, as I recall, and it was a duck hunting arrangement, and they were in the boat. And the white man got to philosophizing, and he said, Sam, you're a Christian, you go to church, you attend every prayer meeting, you never miss your chapter, you pray at table, you talk and testify all the time, and yet you're in trouble all the time. And he said, me, I haven't had any trouble for years and years, everything breaks my way, everything turns to money for me, I have friends, everything breaks my way.

He said, now how is it? You belong to God, and I don't. You get the troubles, and I don't. Well, Sam said, boss, it's like this. He said, when you shoot at a duck and kill it, and it drops plop into the water and lies still, do you shoot at it again? He said, no. He said, which ones do you shoot at again? He said, I shoot at the ones that are wounded and are getting away. And Sam said, that explains it, boss. He said, the devil knows that he has you, and he lets you alone, but he sees me escaping, and that's why I get a bullet every once in a while. I'm getting away.

Now, that's it precisely, and it's good sound philosophy. Temptations, this thing is from Me, says God. Now stop that worrying and abusing yourself, lashing yourself like the flagellantes, and saying, I'm no good, I'll whip myself, I'm being tempted. Of course you're being tempted. The servant is not better than his Lord, this thing is from God.

And there is persecution. Some people do get persecution, and then there was Joseph. You remember Joseph in Egypt, that passage back in the last chapter of the book of Genesis, tells us a wonderful thing. Joseph was sold, you remember, down into slavery into Egypt for a small amount of money, and went down there and was put in jail, and went through two years, or at least a long period of imprisonment.

And later on, when his brethren came down, and Joseph was second to the king, running all Egypt as sort of a prime minister, the brethren came down. He made himself known, and they wept, and he said to them, don't weep, it's perfectly all right. As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good to bring to pass as it is this day, and to save much people alive.

If when poor Joseph was going through his persecution, he had thought it over as no doubt he did, he'd have wondered why God allowed it. He was being persecuted by his

brethren. God says, son, don't get excited, this thing is from me, to perfect you and save many people alive. So, persecution is from God, either directly or indirectly.

Then there is failure. I hesitate to say this, some people want to leap on me for it, but I believe in being real. And here was a man named Peter, and you'll remember that he denied his Lord. And you'll have to admit it was a failure. But long before Peter lied and used bad language and denied his Lord, his Lord had foreseen his coming failure and had said, Satan has desired you to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not. The prayers of Jesus had been prevenient prayers, and they had been put up to heaven effectually for Peter before he was put into the sieve.

Our Lord Jesus saw Peter as a half bushel of chaff and wheat, and Peter saw himself as a half bushel of wheat. He didn't see the chaff at all. And the devil wanted to destroy Peter. So the Lord said, all right, devil, you go ahead and shake him and sift him and blow on him a while. And the devil no doubt smiled one of his rare devilish smiles and said, I'm going to actually get at this prime apostle. I'm going to get at Peter.

So he got at Peter, and he shook him and sifted him. And Peter, in the middle of it all, got morally dizzy and denied his Lord. And when the sifting was over, the chaff was all gone and Peter was reduced to what he had been all the time, a quart of wheat and 50 quarts of chaff. Peter thought he was all wheat, and the devil thought he was all chaff. But Jesus knew he was part chaff and part wheat. So, he got rid of this chaff. This thing is from me.

Now I'm not talking, I suppose, to oh, a very few people. But what overrates yourself? We all tend to overrate ourselves. We like to brood over our successes and what people think of us and mull over our mail. Editors are tempted to do that. Occasionally somebody will write one that sort of take a quart of chaff out. But mostly they're praising you for this and that. And you're likely to get a notion that you're more valuable. That's not the way to put it now, really, because your value is infinite before God. But at least I mean greater than you are.

The only way God has to do, he can't tell us. We won't believe it. God comes and said to Peter, Peter, you'll deny me. Peter said me? Deny you? Oh no. He said these others may, but not I. you'll see. Peter wouldn't believe it when the Lord told him he was one fifth-sixteenth wheat and fifteenth-sixteenth chaff. Peter didn't believe it. He said, oh no, there's a mistake here someplace, Lord. They've got, you've got, you pulled the wrong card out of the file. It isn't I. So, the Lord smiled and said, this thing is from me, Peter. And when poor Peter had been loved back into fellowship with his Lord, he never made that mistake again. He found his right size.

There is such a thing, brethren, as stepping on a scale. Some of you growing youngsters want to believe you weigh more than you do. And some of you youngsters that were once youngsters but are now not anymore and are growing in the wrong directions. You want to believe that you don't weigh as much as you do. I recommend a scale. Step on and stop arguing. You know how much you weigh after the scale gets done with you.

And so, this thing is from me. There's your nice, lovely, streamlined scale sitting there in a corner. And you've got an inflated notion about yourself. You like to think you're as willowy as the breeze-blown bush down by the riverside. And the scale says, this thing

is from me. Step on. You step on and you're instantly disillusioned. Then that's what failure will do for us. I don't think we ought to fail. And I think if we were spiritual, we ought to be. There'd be other ways to teach us, but it seems there isn't. So, the Lord used Peter's failure.

Now some of you have failed maybe this last week. I wish you hadn't. I hope maybe you didn't. But if you did, there's no reason why you should wear a black armband for the rest of the month and say to yourself, oh, I'm no good, I'm no good. Of course you're not. But you have one who thinks you are. And He thought it so fully that He died for you. And He made you the apple of His eye and He wrote you in His hands and in His heart and on His shoulders.

So, you must be worth something after all. And if you failed him somewhere this week, I'm sorry. This thing is from me. Now if you'll bow your head and ask him to forgive you for failing him, you'll know how small you are and how weak you are and how to trust your Lord better than you did.

Then there is bereavement. Look at this man, Lazarus. He died while Jesus tarried. And Jesus came way late. And when he got there, Lazarus was in the grave. And Jesus went to the grave and said, Lazarus, come forth. And Lazarus came forth. But he didn't come forth alone.

Do you know what came forth out of the grave with Lazarus? The 11th chapter of John. When Jesus said, come forth, out walked Lazarus. And trailing close behind, out walked the 11th chapter of John. And the 11th chapter of John has set alight in more graves than you could count on a summer's day. And has given hope and cheer to more people who've lost their loved ones and has made dying easy for the souls of a million Christians from that hour to this. Oh no, He didn't come out of that grave alone, but that hopeful, cheerful, buoyant, vibrant 11th chapter of John came out with Him.

This thing is from me. I let you die, said Jesus, in order that this might be a ladder to coming race, coming ages to climb on. This might be a star of hope over the cemetery. This might be a light for all Christians.

And there's tribulations. Paul had his tribulations. I read this morning about how the front part of the ship stuck on the sandbar and the hinder part of the ship, the stern, they say now, was caught in the waves and wind and broke into pieces. The ship went to pieces, and everybody fell out and grabbed a board and got ashore. Well, it was pretty tough. Paul had said two nights, 14 days and 14 nights, there hadn't been a sun or a star. And they'd been practically without food and without hope in that little old-fashioned ship being tossed in the terror of the Mediterranean Sea. But God said, don't worry, Paul, this thing is from me.

And what was the result? The result was that the light of Christianity reached to pagan Rome and all the lives were saved into the bargain. To Paul, it looked as if somebody was picking on him. But to God, it was all a part of a far-looking purpose. This thing is from me.

So, you're in tribulation. You're having your troubles. Things aren't doing so well at home. Well, you can take it one of two ways. You can get out your crying towel and say, why does this happen to me? Or you can hear Him say, this thing is from Me. Hold still and wait. Watch Me. And then you will see the miracle.

And there's illness. Now, I have an example or two from the Bible. There was a man born blind.

When his parents noticed that the little chap couldn't see, I suppose their hearts grieved terribly over it. They said, our little boy can't see. And when he began to stumble and fall and run into things and hurt himself, no doubt bitterness came to his parents' heart. Or if they were good believers and God lovers, if it wasn't bitterness, it was a wonderment and a puzzlement. Why was our baby born blind? But that same man born blind found Jesus Christ through his blindness. We haven't any way of knowing, nor do we have any grounds for believing, that he'd ever have found Jesus if he'd been a seeing man.

If he'd been a seeing man, he might well have been out working when he was rather sitting by the wayside. But because he was not a seeing man but was shut up in the dark precincts of his own mind, his ears were sharp, and he heard the sound of passing footsteps. Who is it? It's Jesus of Nazareth. And he cried, Jesus of Nazareth. Thou son of David, I think the language he used, have mercy on me. He found the Lord and rose and followed him in the way and became a disciple. And he's in heaven tonight with both eyes bright and seeing. This thing is from me.

So, the sickness you don't like, everybody would like to be as healthy as Carolina, what's his name, Carolyn, that big football player here down at Notre Dame. Everybody would like to be in state of perfect health. I wish we all could be. That is, my human heart says, I wish you well. But I don't know, but what maybe some of us are kept in the way because we just don't have energy enough to get out. This thing is from me. Make something of it, please.

And there are disappointments, and I'm finished. Disappointments, oh, we want our own way. You know the acme of all disappointments? I'll tell you. A 12-year-old boy, Saturday morning of the Sunday school picnic, when he jumps out of bed, 12 feet from the bed and lands, a foot for a year, and then looks out the window, it's pouring it down. That is the acme of disappointment. What a time he was going to have that day. And suddenly the sharp bite, the sting of disappointment. I can't, we can't go. There's no use even to call. It's out. We're finished. That disappointment to a 12-year-old, that's pretty serious. And it can hurt like everything.

And when we get older, we don't get any better, we just get tougher. We're just as quickly and as easily disappointed later on. Mama, you were going to shop today, or not today, but maybe Tuesday you say. You're going to go to Marshall Fields, Boston store. And if nobody's looking, you may even sneak into Woolworth's. And you're going to, your husband has given you a check, and you're going to stop at the corner currency exchange and have it turned into good green. And Tuesday's going to be your day. And the baby comes down with an infected throat. And you can't get out of the house now.

Don't look at me honestly and tell me that doesn't hurt you. Of course it hurts. You're disappointed. You don't like it. You say to yourself, I never get anything that ever goes my way. And you reach for the crying towel. And you begin to wipe it off. Wipe off the bitter tears that start, as the poets say.

Now that's the way we are. You men, you got a golf game coming up. You're just about to break 80, 82, 83, 84. You've been able to get around those 19 holes, 84, sometimes 90 when you're not feeling too well. You're after 80. And you've got a fellow who's going to give you some tips, and he's a semi-pro, and you've got a morning, oh I'm going out there and I'm going to learn today. And by next week it'll be 80 and maybe even under 80.

And the next day your wife said, listen, it's impossible. Look, look what's got to be done. Look. And you give up. But you don't give up gracefully. You say, but listen, I can only have the benefit of this man today, this semi-pro, who's going to give me some tips. I can break 80. And she says, if you break 80 at the expense of the house, and the home, and the children, and the car, and the lawn. All right, he gives up, but he doesn't talk much that day. Now, he doesn't sulk. He's a Christian. But you know, he's just sort of meditating. He doesn't say much. He just sort of meditates as he goes around doing what he doesn't want to do.

Now those are only trifling disappointments, but dear people, there are other kinds of disappointments that you don't laugh about. You laughed about the ones I gave you as an example, because they're shallow. But there are disappointments you don't laugh about. They cut so deep in and so deep down.

I've had women come to me, a few of them in my time, white, gray, chalk-faced, and sit and say, Mr. Tozer, my home's finished. It's finished. I have no longer any reason to believe that my husband has any regard for me, and it's only a matter of days until the whole thing blows, and our children will be separated. You don't laugh about that. That's not surface. That goes way to the deeps of the being.

A man worked on me once, and I groaned, and he said, I'm sorry, but I couldn't help it. He said, what you felt there is what surgeons call surgical pain. Surgical pain isn't a skinned knuckle. Surgical pain goes clear down to Adam and shakes his teeth out, and you're hurt into your ancient family tree, cleared down to the roots.

And there are disappointments that you don't laugh about. It isn't a skinned knuckle, a disappointed golf game, a picnic that didn't come off. It's a grief that wrings you like a towel. What are we going to do with it? The answer is, child of God, this thing is from me. You can't believe it now but try to believe it. Believe it in your grief, and the day will be when you'll believe it in your joy. Believe it in your tears, and the day will come when you'll believe it with your smile. This thing is from me.

Somebody wrote a doggerel poem, which I'll spare you, but in too many verses and too many lines, there is at least one thought embodied. It is this thought, that disappointment needs only to have the letter D taken off and the letter H put on, and you've changed it from disappointment to his appointment. What is disappointment to you may be God's appointment for you.

And if you'll remember what I told the Sunday school, if you want to be happy in the future, do now what you will in the future wish you had done. So, if you want to get the best of your disappointments; incidentally, there's a Methodist preacher who is going to write a series of articles for the Alliance Weekly. He's an evangelical Methodist preacher from the East, calling it with New Jersey, First Methodist pastor. And he's going to write a series of getting the best of, getting the best of your illness, getting the best of your disappointment, getting the best of your losses, and so on. I look forward to reading them myself.

If you will want to get the best of your disappointments and tears and griefs and temptations and all the rest, then hear God say now what you wish you'd heard him say then. Hear him say now, this thing is from Me.