

Obstacles and Difficulties

I. Understanding God's Love—Eph. 3:17-19

- A. Understanding God's love is key to experiencing the fullness of God.
- B. We speak often of God's love as seen in nature, human relations, etc.. What about the harder questions?
- C. Where is God's love seen in obstacles and difficulties?

II. Understanding the Source of Difficulties

- A. Satan brings difficulties – Job 2:7, II Cor. 12:7, Zech. 3:1-2

Every step that we advance we see **obstacles that Satan presents**, and we have to wrestle with difficulties,... {UL 370.5}

The servant of God must endure with fortitude the attacks of the enemy, his grievous taunts, and must overcome the **obstacles which Satan will place** in his way. Satan will seek to discourage the followers of Christ, so that they may not pray or study the Scriptures, {RH, April 8, 1890 par. 5}

- B. Many difficulties brought on by our own mistakes. Gen. 27:41; II Sam. 15:13-14 – See PP 727;

There will be obstacles to retard this work. These we have had to meet wherever missions have been established. **Lack of experience, imperfections, mistakes, unconsecrated influences**, have had to be overcome. {RH, December 6, 1887 par. 7}

It was quite a problem with Brethren Sutherland and Magan and their faithful associates as to how, with limited means, they were to adapt themselves to the work in Madison, Tenn. They had many **obstacles and difficulties** to meet, some of which need never have come into the work. {SpTB11 30.3}

- C. Some trials brought directly by God!

- 1. Crossing the Red Sea - Ex. 13:21; 14:1-3; 10-12

WHY? How did this reveal His Love?

God in His providence brought the Hebrews into the mountain fastnesses before the sea, that He might manifest His power in their deliverance and signally humble the pride of their oppressors. He might have saved them in any other way, but **He chose this method** in order to test their faith and strengthen their trust in Him. {PP 290.1}

In leading them by the way of the Red Sea, the Lord revealed Himself as a God of **compassion** as well as of judgment. PP 282.1

- 2. Water stops – Exodus 17:1-7 & Numbers 20:2

- a. Water had come from rocks along the way. (See 1 Cor. 10:1-4)

From the smitten rock in Horeb first flowed the living stream that refreshed Israel in the desert. During all their wanderings, wherever the need existed, they were supplied with water by a miracle of God's mercy. **The water did not, however, continue to flow from Horeb. Wherever in their journeyings they wanted water, there from the clefts of the rock it gushed out beside their encampment.** PP 411.1

- b. Suddenly stopped!

Just before the Hebrew host reached Kadesh, the living stream ceased that for so many years had gushed out beside their encampment. It was the Lord's purpose again to test His people. He would prove whether they would trust His providence or imitate the unbelief of their fathers. {PP 413.3}

How Did This Reveal His Love? "The cessation of the miraculous flow of water should therefore have been a cause of rejoicing, a token that the wilderness wandering was ended. Had they not been blinded by their unbelief, they would have understood this. But that which should have been an evidence of the fulfillment of God's promise was made the occasion of doubt and murmuring." {PP 413.4}

3. Other E.G. White statements on God bringing difficulties

Some God trains by **bringing to them disappointment and apparent failure.** It is **His purpose that they shall learn to master difficulties.** GW 269.2

He will place us amid trials and difficulties,... (RH May 10, 1887). {5BC 1091.3}

III. Can God's Purposes Be Fulfilled Regardless of the Source?

- A. God orders the events most trying – Gen. 50:20 & Rom. 8:28 & 9T 286

There are homes for the pilgrims of earth. There are robes for the righteous, with crowns of glory and palms of victory. All that has perplexed us in the providences of God will in the world to come be made plain. The things hard to be understood will then find explanation. The mysteries of grace will unfold before us. Where our finite minds discovered only confusion and broken promises, we shall see the most perfect and beautiful harmony. We shall know that **infinite love ordered the experiences that seemed most trying.** As we realize the tender care of Him who makes all things work together for our good, we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. {9T 286.2}

- B. James 1:2-3

- C. Patence: Same word as in Revelation 14:12

AV - patience 29, enduring 1, patient continuance 1, patient waiting 1; 32 (GK - 5705)

"In the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty

to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.”

The very obstacles and difficulties of the way are for the **purpose of making you mighty in faith and giving you spiritual strength.**

ST, December 22, 1887 par. 8

It is obstacles that make men strong. It is not helps, but difficulties, conflicts, rebuffs, that make men of moral sinew. Too much ease and avoiding responsibility have made weaklings and dwarfs of those who ought to be responsible men of moral power and strong spiritual muscle. {CG 156.3}

I prayed for strength, and then I lost awhile
All sense of nearness, human and divine;
The love I leaned on failed and pierced my heart,
The hands I clung to loosed themselves from mine;
But while I swayed, weak, trembling, and alone,
The everlasting arms upheld my own.

I prayed for light; the sun went down in clouds,
The moon was darkened by a misty doubt,
The stars of heaven were dimmed by earthly fears,
And all my little candle flames burned out;
But while I sat in shadow, wrapped in night,
The face of Christ made all the darkness bright.

I prayed for peace, and dreamed of restful ease,
A slumber free from pain, a hushed repose;
Above my head the skies were black with storm,
And fiercer grew the onslaught of my foes;
But while the battle raged, and wild winds blew,
I heard His voice and perfect peace I knew.

I thank You, Lord, You were too wise to heed
My feeble prayers, and answer as I sought,
Since these rich gifts Your bounty has bestowed
Have brought me more than all I asked or thought;
Giver of good, so answer each request
With Your own giving, better than my best.

Annie Johnson Flint

Life is disciplinary. While in the world, the Christian will meet with adverse influences. There will be provocations to test the temper; and it is by meeting these in a right spirit that the Christian graces are developed. The standard is high to which we must attain if we would be children of God, pure, holy, and undefiled; but how could we reach this standard if there were no difficulties to meet, no obstacles to surmount, nothing to develop patience and endurance? Trials are not the smallest

blessings that come to us. They are designed to nerve us to determination to succeed. Instead of allowing them to hinder, oppress, and destroy us, we are to use them as God's means of enabling us to gain the victory over self. {ST, February 10, 1909 par. 1}

Every one who seeks to follow the path of duty will at times be assailed by doubt and unbelief. The way will sometimes be so barred by obstacles, apparently insurmountable, as to dishearten those who will yield to discouragement; but God is saying to such, Go forward. Do your duty at any cost to yourselves. The sea of trouble which threatens to overwhelm you will open as you advance, revealing a safe path for your feet. The trials and difficulties which seem so formidable, which fill your soul with dread, will vanish as you move boldly forward in the path of obedience, humbly trusting in God. {ST, November 11, 1880 par. 15}

It is God's help alone that has enabled them to move forward in the face of difficulties which at times have threatened to overcome them. If all in our ranks knew how difficult it has been to establish the work in places which have since become important centers, they would realize that it takes courage to face an unpromising situation, and to declare, with hands uplifted to heaven, we will not fail nor become discouraged. Those who have not broken the ground in fields that have never before been worked, can not understand the difficulties of pioneer work. If they could understand God's working, they would not only rejoice because of what has been done, but would see cause for rejoicing in the future of the work. {SW, May 29, 1902 par. 3}

In the future we shall have to contend with difficulties tenfold greater than any we have yet had. Do you ask why I say this? Do you not realize that his time is short? He is working and planning with intensity of effort to place obstacles in the way of God's people, and to hinder their progress. We have the powers of darkness to meet. At this time, more than ever before, willing, unquestioning, obedience is needed, if we come off conquerors. {PC 318.4}

Those who are finally victorious will have seasons of terrible perplexity and trial in their religious life; but they must not cast away their confidence, for this is a part of their discipline in the School of Christ, and it is essential in order that all dross may be purged away. The servant of God must endure with fortitude the attacks of the enemy, his grievous taunts, and must overcome the **obstacles which Satan will place** in his way. Satan will seek to discourage the followers of Christ, so that they may not pray or study the Scriptures, and he will throw his hateful shadow athwart the path to hide Jesus from the view, to shut away the vision of his love, and the glories of the heavenly inheritance. It is his delight to cause the children of God to go shrinkingly, tremblingly, and painfully along, under continual doubt. He seeks to make the pathway as sorrowful as possible; but if you keep looking up, not down at your difficulties, you will not faint in the way, you will soon see Jesus reaching his hand to help you, and you will only have to give him your hand in simple confidence, and let him lead you. As you become trustful, you will become hopeful. {RH, April 8, 1890 par. 5}