

church of Christ at Greenwood

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“Count It All Joy”

Allen Malone

Most of us will suffer some kind of *“thorn in the flesh,”* at least occasionally. As we age, some of us will likely suffer more of these “thorns,” at times experiencing more than one simultaneously. We may be startled by some of our involuntary responses to these trials; surprised that we would question God or be envious toward those whose lives seem trouble-free. At the very least, we may find ourselves lamenting not being able to serve as we once did or, worse still, regretting that we did not serve more when we could have.

What we who are justified by faith need to remember is that, instead of grieving as those who have no hope, we can delight in the Lord’s peace. Times of trial are times to *“rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”* This rejoicing is not just an in-spite-of-our-trials joy, but an especially-in-trials experience. *“We also rejoice in our sufferings.”*

God assures us that He will use our hardships and struggles to search our hearts, purify our faith, produce in us perseverance and tested-character, and equip us for greater usefulness, further establishing our hope. By His sufficient grace we can endure; not just hold-on-for-dear-life or merely cope, but be matured and perfected, transformed by God for greater purity, usefulness, and nearness to Him. Times of trial are opportunities to experience the Lord’s ever-sufficient grace and the love the Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts. We discover that our greatest trials, particularly the ones human-wisdom cannot explain or solve, don’t just highlight our weakness; they spotlight His strength. They are opportunities to better know the power God has for us who believe.

Whether or not “we will understand it better by and by” (as we sometimes sing), like Job, we can come out on the other side knowing both the Lord and ourselves better (Job 42:5-6). And as we exalt the Lord in our hearts and keep a good conscience even in the face of adversity and inequity, we may well find that we come to possess the saving influence we’ve long desired. When that time comes may we be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks a reason for the hope that is in us.

What revelation tells us, experience affirms – *God is faithful, and He will do it!* Let us, therefore, *“count it all joy.”*