

Memory Verse

1 Peter 5:10

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

GRACELIFE



CHURCH

**GOD'S PURPOSES
IN PAIN - PART 4**

**FOR OUR
PROGRESS**

We have addressed the importance of having a **Biblical understanding of God's character** as a **foundation** for *life*, and the *problems we face*. God *directly brings* or *indirectly allows* problems for a variety of reasons. **One** is to **Prove**, or to test us and *show us where our faith and love lie*. Do we trust Him or not?

A **second** reason we *looked at last time* was to **Purify** us from the things that hinder our relationship with Him, or are an offense to Him. He does this through His "*refining fire*" and by "*coloring*" our lives in the ways He knows we need to become more like Christ. We see our blind spots, our struggles, our sin, and in what areas we are not like Christ. We see our lack of **Progress** in the faith, or *our lack of maturity*.

A. How God Uses Problems for Our Progress

Poem...

How does *God use problems* to help us **Progress** in our faith? A lot of it *depends on our perspective* and *how we respond to the problems*, the fact is, **difficulties toughen us up!**



A. How God Uses Problems for Our Progress

Spiritually speaking, *problems shape our character!*

Romans 5:3-5 - Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance (*patience*), 4and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

A. How God Uses Problems for Our Progress

What is character? *It is who we are internally, expressed externally.* The *more mature* we are, the *more character* we have. The more we endure suffering, depending on the Lord, the more we grow in Christlikeness, or mature.

A. How God Uses Problems for Our Progress

1 Peter 5:10 - And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

A. How God Uses Problems for Our Progress

James 1:2-4 - Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness (*patience*). 4And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

A. How God Uses Problems for Our Progress

Philippians 3:10 - That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

A. How God Uses Problems for Our Progress

Peter and James, whose audience was persecuted Jewish believers, talk about the *suffering they faced*, and the results *God was going to bring into their lives*. God would *restore, confirm, strengthen, establish, perfect, and complete* them! It was not something they did, though *their response was important*.

A. How God Uses Problems for Our Progress

James says they would *lack nothing* as a result of the trials, because they *endured*, or were *patient*, which we will cover later. In 1 word, the result of the persecution and problems, was **maturity**.

Hebrews 12:3-11 - Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 4In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when

reproved by him. 6For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

7It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

8If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

9Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

B. What Progress Looks Like

Philippians 3:10 - Jesus.

If you want to **gauge your maturity, look at Jesus**. God's purpose for us is to become **more like Christ**. The Father wants us to think like Jesus, act like Jesus, have the mind or attitude of Jesus, speak like Jesus, love like Jesus, be bold like Jesus, and proclaim the truth like Jesus. This is how we "**reflect**" Him in our lives.

B. What Progress Looks Like

Thinking - *Philippians 2:1-8* - So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2complete my joy by being of the **same mind**, having the same love, being in full accord and of **one mind**.
3Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant

B. What Progress Looks Like

than yourselves. 4Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5Have **this mind** among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in

B. What Progress Looks Like

the likeness of men. 8And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

B. What Progress Looks Like

Loving - *Mark 6:34* - When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

Jesus healed, talked and spent time with others, explained truth, and more. At the

B. What Progress Looks Like

core of His love, was to *teach*, to *explain who God was*, *confront sin and error*, *how to live under the Law*, and *give an example of how to love*.

B. What Progress Looks Like

Romans 12 - 12:1-2 - I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2Do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by **testing** you may **discern** what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

B. What Progress Looks Like

Based on what Paul said in *chapters 1-11*, he now appeals to them and us, to offer ourselves to God. He also said *not to be conformed to this world*. In contrast, be transformed... how?

By ***renewing your MIND!***

B. What Progress Looks Like

In verses 3-8 Paul talks about serving the Lord and each other within a local assembly using the gifts God has given to you! A **mature Christian** is **NOT** a **spectator** or a **consumer**, but a **producer** in *ministry*. It may be a "*small*" or "*large*" amount by our standards, but the point is, you are involved. There are times when we cannot contribute - *illness, new baby, move, etc.* But sooner or later you will be **productive** and **involved**.

B. What Progress Looks Like

Verses 9-21 give a summary of **Christian character** involving *genuine love, hating evil, serving the Lord, patience, prayer, providing for others, blessing those who persecute you, not repaying evil for evil, and more.* This is what a **mature Christian** looks like, and *God uses problems for our progress.*

B. What Progress Looks Like

When we face problems, continuing with the **heat** example, *areas where we are mature rise to the top* and help us get through those times. When we face problems, *areas where we are immature rise to the top* and hinder us getting through those times.

This is *why* God removes those areas that hinder our growth. What is our part?

C. Becoming a Mature Christian

1. Start where you are.

We cannot begin where we are not!

Spiritually, *begin where you are*. If you are a new Christian, find a good church, get into your Bible, read it, study it, learn it, and do what God says and try different areas of service to see where He has gifted you.

C. Becoming a Mature Christian

2. Do what you know to do.

We are *all limited* in *what we know*. One important factor in maturing is to *follow through or do what we know to do*. If we know God says, "Do not lie," we start there and recognize the many areas where we know we need to tell and live the truth.

2 Peter 1:5-10 - For this very reason, **make every effort** to supplement your **faith** with **virtue**, and virtue with **knowledge**, 6and knowledge with **self-control**, and self-control with **steadfastness**, and steadfastness with **godliness**, 7and godliness with **brotherly affection**, and brotherly affection with **love**. 8For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being

ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 10Therefore, brothers, be all the **more diligent** to confirm your calling and election, for if you **practice** these qualities you will never fall.

C. Becoming a Mature Christian

3. Develop discernment and self discipline.

Hebrews 5:12-14 - For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since

C. Becoming a Mature Christian

3. Develop discernment and self discipline.

he is a child. 14But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

C. Becoming a Mature Christian

3. Develop discernment and self discipline.

The writer of Hebrews warns his readers of stepping back into the Mosaic sacrificial system, *apart from faith in Christ*. He also said they knew enough to be able to teach! Then he rebukes them for needing milk, *rather than solid food*. He then tells us how

C. Becoming a Mature Christian

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to *develop maturity* - have their *discernment trained*, by *constant practice* to *distinguish between good and evil*. **Develop your discernment, by *knowing the truth*. Develop self-discipline by *doing the truth consistently*.**

C. Becoming a Mature Christian

4. Take responsibility for your life.

Stop making excuses. **Stop** blaming others. **Stop** blaming the past, this or that, for *what you do*. Another **mark of maturity** is, as we say in the south, "*to fess up*" or **take responsibility** to what you have done, have said, are doing and are saying. Confess what *you did wrong, and right*.

C. Becoming a Mature Christian

4. Take responsibility for your life.

Own it, accept the *consequences* or *blessings* and move on.

You will not mature in life, nor in the faith, if you continue to blame others for your decisions.