

Russell Kelfer

The Power in Our Past

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Series: Joseph and the Sovereignty of God

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

The Power in Our Past

THE PROBLEMS IN OUR PAST

We live in a world that is looking back over its shoulder as never before in history. The past has suddenly become important. The mood of the day is to reconstruct yesterday and revive memories long since forgotten. People are spending more time under their family trees than the trees in their yards, and restaurants and stores have found that “new” motif is the “old” design of 1950’s diners filled with 1940’s furniture.

The secondary problem is that we also live in a world where the moral fibre of man is disintegrating before our very eyes, and the focus on “why” we behave as we do, has been, to a large degree, shifted from the arena of sin and choice; to dredging up the past and blaming the people and the circumstances of our childhood for virtually all of our character deficiencies and all of our wrong behavior.

We have suddenly all become “victims” of alcoholic parents, favoritism, single parent homes, peer rejection, ethnic disillusionment, or performance failures. And these, we would add, are legitimate concerns, not to be overlooked. But the problem lies in the fact that the world would wallow in these “unfortunate” incidents as though they were acts of mankind above and beyond the hand of a sovereign God, and as though the marks they have left upon us are indelible scars we must learn to live with, rather than the beautiful birth marks of a God who delights into using the all things of life for His glory.

Either He is God or He’s not. Either He does what He says He does or He doesn’t. And if, in the counseling room or the conference room or the pulpit, we even imply that these incidents were accidents, or that these scars must leave us emotional or spiritual cripples, we are denying the absolutes of Scripture and making God to be a liar. That, beloved, is blasphemy.

So our objective is not to overlook the past. God forbid. It is the raw material out of which our lives are formed. Our objective is to see the past from God’s perspective, not man’s. And from God’s perspective, those very things secular psychology mourns over, are The Master’s clay, from which He forms that incredible commodity

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known as character, and out of which flows that wonderful expression of His purpose known as ministry.

The truth of the matter is, there is power in our past. The explosive of the evil one, left to extinguish our concepts of self, is in fact the dynamite of God's purposes, designed to reveal His very nature to us. A sovereign God, even before the foundation of the world knew all about you; and, according to Psalm 139, "He knit you together in your mother's womb". It was He who said in Jeremiah, chapter 1, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you..."

God makes no mistakes. And nothing is done on planet earth that He is not aware of, and not prepared to use for His glory. Nothing. That is the subject of this study. It is about how the God of Eternity takes the events of the past and uses them in the present to equip us for the future. And our study of the life of Joseph ought to have reminded us as few things can, just how much higher His ways are than ours. Had we been God, we never would have allowed most of the things that occurred in Joseph's life.

Can you not see the analysts of Joseph's day decrying the "deeply disturbing" elements of Joseph's childhood, categorizing him as part of a segment of society that was bound and determined to have problems for life? From man's perspective, virtually everything that happened in this young man's past was destructive, debilitating, and depressing. What possible hope could there be for a man like this?

While the story is still fresh in our minds, let's review the incidents that occurred in his young life, and see how a sovereign God both planned and used the very things we would have omitted, had we been God.

Parental favoritism

First, he was the product of parental favoritism (Genesis 37:3,4). His parents chose to love him more than his brothers, and chose to overtly demonstrate that love in tangible ways that provoked envy, jealousy, bitterness, and strife. Why would God allow that?

God allowed that favoritism to develop spiritual pride, which would ultimately lead to humility. He allowed jealousy among his brothers to create a reaction which would ultimately place him where he needed to be to accomplish His purposes. How else would

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God have gotten Joseph to Egypt? How else would he have removed him from his protective family? Oh, how much higher are His ways than ours. He used that jealousy to separate him from the source of his pride and to call him to a special work. That is not to justify parental favoritism if you are a parent. But, beloved, if you have been blaming all of your problems on your parents because they didn't love you as much as your brothers and sisters, or because they loved you too much, and caused jealousy and strife; stop it. God knew what was happening, and He designed a plan to use it for His glory. His "all things" for your life included taking that favoritism and using it as a springboard to develop either character in you or circumstances in your life that would place you where you needed to be. Satan meant it for evil. But "God meant it for good."

Peer Rejection

The result of that parental favoritism was peer rejection. So resentful were Joseph's brothers of his favored treatment and his arrogant response to that favoritism, that they hated him enough to kill him. His only source of relationships was his family, and they, to a man, refused to have anything to do with him. He was a man without a friend. And we would have nothing but pity for someone so disliked that his own flesh and blood got together and laughed and scorned and ridiculed him every time he arrived, and whose only argument was whether to kill him or sell him as a slave.

But don't you see? That peer rejection protected him from the very peer pressures that might have robbed him of his convictions... convictions that later caused him to stand up to an evil woman and face the consequences of being right while being wronged. And did not, he in his loneliness, increase his capacity to be a visionary? And did not that capacity ultimately allow him to allow God to use him to run an entire nation?

Peer Persecution

That rejection by his peers resulted in persecution the likes of which few people ever experience. He's dropped in a dry well, and while his brothers munch sandwiches outside, he hears them plot to kill him. How would that do as material for a "negative self-image"? But God let those closest to him destroy his "self-image" so God's image could be ultimately formed in him. And through that rejection and persecution, God created in him a spirit of compassion that later manifested itself in the lives of a butler and

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a baker who were grieved and hurting. The greater the abuse we suffer, the greater our capacity to weep with those who weep.

Vocational Success

But not everything in Joseph's life was bad. God allowed him to experience temporary vocational success, honoring the principles of diligence, faithfulness, honesty, and integrity. Potiphar made him number two in command, and as he did, young Joseph, stripped of the protective cocoon of his father's love, developed confidence as a leader; he became aware of God's sovereignty, and he ultimately suffered the death of a vision necessary to succeed. Had Joe still been parading around the neighborhood in his rainbow sports coat, he never would have been able to handle success. So God took him "downhill" to the top, the way God so often does. God simply could not exalt him till he had first been humbled. Doesn't that sound familiar? Now he is tasting the sweetness of success. But God isn't near finished developing His mind in Joe.

Unjust Accusation

Now at the height of his success, he undergoes unjust accusation, a damaged reputation, and unjust treatment by authority. Have you ever experienced that? Potiphar's wife is allowed by God to lure this young man into a choice, and by making the right choice, he suffers the undeserved loss of everything he had suddenly gained. Why would God allow someone He loved to be treated like that?

Well, to start with, "It is the trying of your faith that develops patience." And Joseph would need a boatload of that in the years of drought that would one day face him. By losing his sudden fame, his mind was once again focused on things eternal, and he was reminded that nothing in this life lasts. As his pride, once destroyed by envious brothers, now returned, God humiliated Joseph once again, to be sure his consciousness of what he could do on his own was dead for good. It worked. For years later, this once arrogant youngster stood before Pharaoh and cried, "It is not in me. God shall.." Joseph was reminded of how fleeting success can be. He was reminded that his faith could not be in men, but in God alone, as the one who had exalted him now chooses to believe his immoral wife and casts his hero into prison.

How often God has to let us be disillusioned with men before we will focus all of our trust on Him. So long as we can trust in anything tangible, we will. But "faith is the evidence of things

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not seen” and it is only developed when that which can be seen evaporates before our eyes.

Menial Tasks

Down to life’s dungeons go our hero. He is given the task of serving on one of life’s “ugly” mission fields. Talk about humiliation. He is cast into prison with those awaiting execution, and there given menial jobs to do, even that of serving the other prisoners. And yet that prison experience gave him time to be alone with God, taught him submission to unjust authority, refocused his attention on eternity, developed sensitivity and a ministry, and all the while burning deep within him a spirit of patience and faith that simply could not have been learned in the palace.

And that’s true of the “prison” you may be in. Maybe it’s a prison of economic bondage, or a painful marriage, or a difficult relationship, or a tough job. God allowed you to be there. Not to punish you, to train you in godliness. And just as you cannot prepare for war in the country club, you cannot be equipped for the bombs and bullets of spiritual destruction until you are sent to life’s “boot camps” where there is no glory, and very little hope.

And on and on it goes. With every blow that fell upon him, Joseph came one step closer to the level of godliness necessary to be used of God. But had he stayed at home and reveled in his paternal popularity, and lowered his standards to win the acceptance of his phony brothers, he’d have missed God’s best. No doubt Jacob had prayed many times that Jehovah would use this special son of his. The problem was, he, like us, had no idea what it would take to make this special son usable. Fortunately, God did.

To unregenerate man, this boy’s life was a disaster, filled with humiliation, failure, and “almost success”. But to God’s man, Joseph was a model of how you can let a sovereign God “work all things together for His glory.”

So through all of his seemingly untimely troubles, Joseph developed a life message. It was a message God could tell only through him. Among other things his message was “Before honor comes humility” and “through pressure comes faithfulness” Satan designed and engineered all of these fiascoes to sideline one of God’s living legends. He meant it for evil. But the very same circumstances Satan meant for evil, God meant for good. God did not design them all, but He used them all.

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There was power locked up in Joseph's past. And the power resided not in his favored birth and preferred status, but rather in the seemingly unfortunate blows life dealt him. At the time, he probably could not see it, for the Scripture says:

No test for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous, but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby. (Hebrews 12:11)

So while it's happening, we don't understand. We're too overwhelmed by the blows that are falling upon us, and by the apparent marks those blows are making on our lives. For the next lesson or so, our goal is going to be to examine our own lives in the light of this concept, and in the light of Joseph's and Moses' and Paul's and Jesus'; and to see if we can come to better understand the power in our past.

Satan has dealt us a lie. (That's his business.) The lie is that we are the unfortunate products of the problems we've had, and the results of those problems are negative and irreversible. For this to be true, God would have to be a liar, and Romans 8:28 would have to be cut from our Bibles.

But even though we know better, and even though we talk a good game when it comes to spiritualizing our pasts, most of us struggle for years trying to break free from the bondage to what we are told is the result of our parentage and our childhood and the traumas that followed. It is our goal in this study to try to find some Scriptural absolutes that we can stand on as we enter this battlefield and attempt to find victory.

THE PURPOSE IN OUR PAST

To begin this series, I think it is imperative to take a fresh look at the principle itself. It is best found in Romans 8:28, but that passage is only a reflection of the whole of Scripture, which simply breathes with the sovereignty of God. Joseph might well have taken that verse as his life verse. It totally typifies his message. Let's look at it anew, trying not to overlook its power because of its familiarity.

I am certain that there is virtually no one who has been a believer very long who is not familiar with this passage. The problem is that we become so familiar that the appropriation of it on a day to day basis gets lost in a theological maize, and the enemy has a field day distorting its truth.

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The Context

Let's look first at the context in which it's found. The Apostle is talking about the value of suffering in the Christian life. In verse 18, he makes this incredible statement. I'm not at all sure most of us believe it. He said:

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

Paul is engaged in a discussion with heavy theological implications. He is comparing the deep difficulties of living life on planet earth as a believer to the ultimate joy that we will experience when we are face to face with Jesus Christ at last.

There is no doubt in Paul's mind that this old world was not getting better and better, and wouldn't until Jesus returned. Sin has infected humanity, and the disease is terminal. Paul words it this way:

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. (Hebrews 12:22)

"This world is struggling within itself like a woman who is in labor", Paul says. And it isn't getting better. The struggle goes on. But it isn't just this world. He adds:

Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit; even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. (Hebrews 12:23)

Even we who are Christians are caught up in the struggle. We groan in our bodies, longing, waiting, for the day when this old body and this old life dissolves into the sheer beauty of the life to come. This life is rough. Paul never insinuated that Christians were going to wake up one day and find themselves healthy, wealthy and wise. He wasn't giving out tickets to a spiritual country club where the members came together once a week to pay their respects to God, who in turn was obligated to take away the problems in their lives and replace them with a euphoric kind of life in the clouds.

The Christian life is enlistment in the army of the King. The guarantee is that the battle will be won; not that there will be no battle. It's warfare, and it's spiritual warfare. It is being fought in the heavenlies between Satan and God; and what appear to be the issues on earth are often only smokescreens. The issue isn't that the car won't start, or that the marriage won't work, or that the

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job won't last. Those are the battlefields. The issue is that God and Satan are vying for lordship in your life, and the very things Satan is using to defeat you, God desires to use to defeat him. So Paul goes on:

Likewise, the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God...

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called ones according to His purpose.
(Hebrews 12:26-28)

Because it is a spiritual battle, Paul is saying, the war will be won or lost in the prayer closet, where man relinquishes claim to authority and yields to the Lordship of Christ. We don't even really know how to pray...that's what Paul is saying. So the Spirit even comes to our rescue there. He intercedes on our behalf, teaching us what to ask for, and communicating those requests to God. The issue is the will of God. That's what verse 27 is saying. The issue isn't how to escape the dungeons, the camel caravans or the dry wells of life. The issue is learning to "make intercession according to the will of God."

And we can pray with confidence for the will of God, because we know that all things work together for good to those who love God. Now there is one of the most powerful statements in all of Scripture, but it is also one of the most misused. It has become a happenstance cliché to use when God appears to have abandoned ship and left us to our own devices, and we feel He didn't answer our prayers that way we expected. Then we piously spiritualize the results by uttering our "all things work together" routine. The trouble is, all too often, in our heart of hearts we don't really understand what that means, or if we do, we don't really believe it. The end result is a world full of believers who outwardly espouse the "Praise God anyway" theology, while inwardly growing bitter and confused. If their real thoughts could be telecast by satellite to the world, it would sound more like "Why me, Lord? Why me?"

Rightly understood, this verse holds a package of dynamite that explodes into the recesses of our spiritual lives and sets them ablaze with confidence in the sovereignty of God. Let's take it apart,

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phrase by phrase, and see exactly what it says:

The Certainty

We've talked about the context. Next for the certainty. The passage begins: "And we know..." The Greek word is "oidamen" The literal meaning is "to know with an absolute knowledge". It goes beyond uncertain knowledge wherein a person says, "I know the answer to that question." They honestly believe they do, but there is still some uncertainty until they are told whether the answer is right or wrong. But when someone mentions your best friend in a conversation, and says, "Do you know Jim?" You answer, "Do I know him? He's my best friend. Yes, I know him." Absolute, certain, experiential recognition. That's what Paul is saying. Here is something so absolute, there is no room for doubt. Here is a finished, completed assumption. Most things in this life we think we know about. About this we are sure. That's the certainty of the statement to follow: The Amplified Bible words it this way, "God being our partner," we know. It is absolute knowledge coupled with assurance, that God as our partner, this is true.

The Completeness

What is it that we can be so certain about? That all things work together for good. Oh, that little word "all"; what power it possesses. It means "that which is void of exception" It means there are no escape clauses. It means there are no cases that can be dredged up in the far recesses of the most creative mind that would make this statement null and void. It is the word that makes Romans 3:23 so important. It says:

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

If that word "all" were not in that verse, it would be possible for some men or women not to need the blood of Jesus Christ. It would mean that sin is a "relative" term, and that no one could know for sure what their standing is with God apart from His redemptive act. But it's there. "All" means all. No exceptions.

It's the same word Jesus used in Matthew 28:18 when He said "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth". Can you imagine the difference in our authority had He said, "*most* power is given unto Me"? Or even *almost* all power? All means without exception. There is absolutely nothing He cannot do. And in the same way, this completely inclusive word wraps a ribbon around this promise and bars the door to any escape clauses or excuses. It

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is an absolute. We know, we are experientially certain, that without exception, in every situation, the following will be true. Don't you get excited at the absolute assurance of the "all's" in Scripture?

The Concept

Well, so much for the context and the certainty; now for the concept itself. We can be sure that:

all things work together for good to them that love God.

All things- the word "things" means all people, experiences, and circumstances; past, present and future.

Here, then, is our statement to date:

We have absolute knowledge, coupled with assurance, God being our partner, that everything that has ever happened to us, is happening, or ever will—work together.

The Greek word is "sunergew" (sunergeo) It means "to co-labor in harmony with". It is a picture of a team working together, bound by a common cause. It's used in Mark 16 where it says:

And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, (Mark 16:20)

In II Corinthians 6:1, the same word is used like this:

We then as workers together with Him, also plead with you..

It is a cooperative term that indicates two partners in harness for the same objective. And in this case, the two partners are:

1- God

2- Every circumstance in your life, past, present, and future.

They are the partners, harnessed together for a common purpose. God is the active partner; the all things of life are the vehicles God uses.

For good- Do you remember what that word "good" means? Do you recall that the will of God is "good, acceptable, and perfect"? And do you recall that the word "good" indicates "that which fulfills God's purpose in harmony with God's word"? The all things of life, then, are co-laboring with God, to produce God's will in your life... that which is ultimately best for you, and will ultimately bring the most glory to God. It's what being in prison did for Paul. It's what being exiled did for John. It's what being nailed to a cross did for Jesus. It worked together for good. It means that "God as your partner, everything that will ever happen to you, or ever has, is a

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co-laborer together with God to bring about His purpose in your life...which is to conform you to His image, and to usher in His kingdom.”

The Criteria

Who, then, is this remarkable promise given to? To “all those who are lovers of God; those He has called who have answered.” The criteria is that this promise is for all Christians, but only for Christians. All things don’t work together for good for unbelievers. Why not? Because they are not the “called ones” according to His purpose until they receive His free gift of salvation. Only those who return God’s love by receiving God’s Son are the “called ones”, but everyone who does, is.

So everything that ever happens to any Christian, once left in God’s hands, becomes a co-laborer taking that very incident and fashioning it into God’s plan to make you like Him, and to share through your life His marvelous message of grace.

The rest of the passage simply says that He has known all along who you would be, and planned all along to make you God-like... How? By using in your life, the all things of life, including the very things of life the world calls “mistakes” or “tragedies” to change your life into His likeness.

Then it says that we are perfectly confident, and often assured (God being our partner) that every event, person, and circumstance in our lives, past, present, and future, is a co-laborer together with God in accomplishing His best, by writing a unique message in our lives. This is true of all Christians, but only of Christians. He has known all along who we would be, and He has planned all along to use these circumstances to make us like Him.”

Now the theology of it is awesome, but the practicality of it is even more awesome. It is one thing to be aware of the truth of it, but it is far, far, more important, and yet far more difficult to be a recipient of the reality of it. It is the experiential understanding of it that allows you to “consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” That, you remember, was the reason this passage was written. Paul was explaining in verse 17, that “if we suffer with Him, we may also be glorified together.”

So whatever happens to us, or whatever has happened to us, now has more than passive meaning. Not only can God allow us

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to forgive and forget, He can and will fashion that very thing into a tool with which to do in us what we've asked Him to do...make us like Him.

The issue, then, isn't so much learning just to "put the past behind us". The issue is to see the power in our past. That thing we are trying to put behind us may well be our greatest source of praise. Without that, we would not have received the grace to become what we are becoming.

The depth of your walk with God, and to some degree the depth of your ministry may well be the result of those very "all things" which you so despised, but which God agreed to co-labor with to accomplish His will in and through you.

In the coming lessons, we are going to look at a list of the factors in our past that have gone into making up our particular individual life messages. We'll look at the negative qualities those experiences produced, and then at the corresponding character qualities that emerge when God is allowed to take our pasts, and energize them through His sovereignty. We'll look at Job's life message. We'll look at the power in Moses' past, and how yours just may correspond with his. We'll look at the "Plan B" principle, and how God takes even our mistakes and wrong choices and recreates a new design for our lives that includes even those so called "tragedies" as part of the "all things" of life.

Our goal is to come to the place where we not only "accept" the all things of life, but begin to be thankful for them. Until we can "In everything give thanks", we have not fully entered into Romans 8:28. In closing, I am going to ask you to focus for one week on a particular part of your life message, the "all" things in your life, that you wish had never happened. Next week we will broaden the picture, and see them in the context of all the events that in your past that blend together to form your life message. For one week, though, let's zero in on those clouds of gloom that hang over our memories and form a backdrop of subtle bitterness and keep the Son of God from radiating His warmth to its fullest.

FOR FOCUS AND APPLICATION

Here, then, is your assignment for the next seven days

1- Memorize Romans 8:18, and Romans 8:26-28.

2- Meditate on that passage throughout the day, taking it one word at a time, focusing your primary attention on that one little

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word...“ALL”.

3- On the back page of this lesson, there is a list of some of the kinds of traumas that are included in the all things of many of our lives. Not all of them apply to you. Maybe only one or two of them do. Maybe more. Take your time and go through that list. We have intentionally not filled in all the blanks. That is part of your assignment.

4- When you have pinpointed the ones that you feel have affected your life, make a chart of your own, listing just those incidents or experiences. Add any additional ones that come to your mind.

5- By the corresponding incident, there is a place for you to list:

- a- the negative traits that experience left in your life, and the corresponding positive qualities that have or may emerge in your life as a result of God's using that experience.
- b- that aspect of the nature of God that is reflected by that positive quality.
- c- A Scriptural example of someone who experienced that trauma, who was later mightily used of God.

6- Consciously spend time alone with God this week, thanking Him over and over for using that experience to do two things:

- a- Sandpaper you into His likeness, changing your character through tribulation
- b- Develop a ministry through you even to others who are passing through the very same kinds of trials.

Remember, the issue isn't to feel thankful, but to give thanks. And remember, you aren't thanking God for the incident, you are thanking Him for the grace the incident released that He has been using to change you.

7- Try to picture in your mind as you do, a loving God, taking a piece of clay, and fashioning it to His liking. See the scars in your life as bruises and discolorations that Satan brought on by beating on your life. Now watch the Master tenderly take those very scars and use them as the center of a new design. Watch that design take shape. Thank Him for loving you so much.

8- As you praise Him, consciously worship Him for His omniscience. It means He understands. Thank Him for His love. It means He cares. Thank Him for His omnipotence. It means He has the power to use the all things of life for His glory. Then thank Him for His sovereignty. It means he not only can, He will. And finally,

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thank Him that His word is immutable. It guarantees you He will. Then, simply praise Him, and rest.

9- Memorize I Thessalonians 5:18. We have three choices in life. We can:

- a- Allow the world to convince us that the blows that have fallen upon our lives are malignant tumors which even The Great Physician cannot remove; and which must, therefore, be left to grow and spread until the venom of bitterness they release attacks the blood stream of the spirit and destroys us. Or we can
- b- Choose to accept them as something we could not help, and try to build a life around them, assuming God will give us the power to do so. Or finally,
- c- We can not only accept them, we can begin to thank God for each and every incident. That horrible experience of child abuse. That unfortunate divorce that so wrecked you emotionally. That alcoholic parent who transmitted his guilt to you. That dreaded handicap that caused others to belittle you. That traumatic experience that left you so scarred and depressed. That unexpected death of a loved one. That series of rejections that left you sure you were worthless. And on and on it goes.

You ask, I should actually thank God for that?

Beloved, if you are going to do the will of God according to I Thessalonians 5:18, you have to thank God for that.

And we have to come to understand that the reason we thank Him is not because we are glad it happened. We aren't. It's because He made us a promise. And it's because we have a God who always keeps His promises.

And what was that promise? I trust you know. That promise was and is this:

“All things—every person, every circumstance, every experience in your life; past, present, and future, are guaranteed, God as your partner, to be co-laborers together with Him to accomplish His will in your life.”

“He knew all along who you were. He knew all along what would happen. And because of His intense love, He planned all along to take those blows and make them the focal point of a brand new work of art; blending those deeper colors into the very pattern of

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your life and becoming the very colors that give your life its beauty.”

What a plan! What grace! What love! What a God!

| Trauma of Life | Negative Trait, Ultimate Spiritual Quality | Aspect of the Nature of God | Biblical Example |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Parental Rejection | Low self-esteem, spiritual hunger | Compassion | Moses |
| Parental Favoritism | Pride, Spiritual humility | Mercy | Joseph |
| Peer Rejection | Loneliness, Protection from peer pressure | Grace | Joseph |
| Broken home | Absence of Trust, Faith in the True Father | Sovereignty | |
| Sickness | Weakness in flesh, Dependence on God | Power | Paul |
| Abuse | | | |
| Failure in school | | | |
| Failure in relationships | | | Peter |
| Traumatic experiences | | | Elijah |
| Bad marriage | | | |
| Loss of loved ones | | | Ruth, Mary, Martha |
| Series of deep disappointments | | | John |
| | | | |
| | | | |

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10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230

210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

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