

## "TURNING TROUBLE INTO TRIUMPH"

TEXT: "It is good for me to have been in trouble" Psalm 119:71

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. The words of our text introduce us to a man....
- B. But, now, as he looks back upon those days of stress....
- C. We have here the spiritual biography of a person....
- D. Text.

### CAUSE OF TROUBLE:

- A. I wonder just what it was that caused him to make this remark.
- B. Although we do not know the exact nature of his difficulty.
- C. Or it may be that these words represent for you a present..
- D. We all experience times of trouble.

### WEAK SURRENDER:

- A. First: there is the way of weak surrender....
- B. It was this type of a blunder that Miss Havisham made in...
- C. There are many people like Miss Havisham, people who surrender..
- D. Poem:

Did you tackle the trouble that came your way  
with a resolute heart and cheerful?  
Or hide your face from the light of day  
with a craven soul and fearful.  
You are beaten to earth? Well, well, what's that...  
Come up with a smiling face.  
It's nothing against you to fall down flat,  
But to lie there that's disgrace!  
The harder you're thrown, why, the higher you bounce.  
Be proud of your blackened eye.  
It isn't the fact that you're licked that counts;  
It's how did you fight and why?  
And that you be done to the death, what then?  
If you battled the best you could,  
If you played your part in the world of men,  
Why the critic will call it good.

### SURRENDER TO CYNICISM:

- A. Just as there are those....
- B. Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his novel, Scarlet Letter, introduces...

### SURRENDER OF SELF TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE FATHER.

- A. Some people give in to trouble without a fight..
- B. This ability to turn trouble into triumph
- C. Centuries ago....
- D. In other words....
- E. I feel it's well for us to remember that while God
- F. What a Gospel.

Prayer

## "TURNING TROUBLE INTO TRIUMPH"

TEXT: "It is well for me to have been in trouble" Psalm 119:71

The words of our text introduce us to a man who is engaged in a bit of spiritual reminiscence. He's taking, what you might call, a long look at the way along which he has travelled in life. And judging from his remark, I would gather that his way in life has not been altogether through green pastures and beside still waters. He indicates to us that he has been through trouble. In all probability, his steps have taken him down into dark dreary canyons, and up and over, high, treacherous mountain peaks. Certainly his life has not been a sheltered life. More than once, the storms of life have broken upon him. More than once, the rude winds have pounded him with their cruel fists. More than once, he has felt the gush of blinding tears on his face.

But now, as he looks back upon those days of stress and strain, he is conscious of the fact that somehow he managed to struggle through them. With great amazement, he sees that these harsh experiences did not produce half the results he thought they would produce as he was passing through them. It appears that the very trouble he thought would destroy him, has actually been the very making of him. His losses have become gains. His troubles have been turned into triumphs. And so now, years later, he looks back with humble gladness and says:

"Yes....it is good for me to  
have been in trouble....."

We have here the spiritual biography of a man who struggled and triumphed many centuries ago. We're separated from this ancient psalmist by seas and centuries. We're separated from him by widely differing customs, and yet we are like him in this respect: that we too have our troubles! We too have drifted down in dark and dreary canyons. We too have felt the rude winds of life pound against us with their cruel fists. We too have felt the gush of hot, blinding tears on our faces. And so it is that we're interested in this psalmist because his experiences in life are strangely modern and up to date.

TEXT

WHAT WAS THE CAUSE OF HIS TROUBLE?

I wonder what it was that  
caused him to make this remark.  
I wonder what it was that

caused him trouble. The psalm provides us with little information regarding the nature of his difficulty. It may be that he was burdened with some obvious and visible difficulty of which the whole world knew. In fact, it may be that his entire life was one long battle with pain. Or, on the other hand, it could be that he had some secret sorrow of which the world knew nothing. It may be that he wept in secret over some tragedy of his own which was all the harder to bear because he could not even share it with his closest friend.

Althought we do not know the exact nature of his trouble, we do know this that his entire life had been touched and shaken by some tragedy. Now some of you may be thinking in your own minds;

"Yes....I can certainly sympathize with that man. My life has had its tragic moments. I've seen the skies become dark. I've felt the bleak chill of dreams that never came true."

Or it may be that this represents a very present experience for some of you. You may be wandering through those dark and lonely canyons of life. You've come to God's house today not with any great degree of confidence. You're not at all sure that you'll find anything here to steady you. But at any rate you're here, hoping that there may be some word of encouragement, some hand stretched out to help you.

We all experience times of trouble. We may sail for many days upon smooth waters, and then suddenly find the storms of life breaking upon us. Sooner, or later, there come days of bewilderment and confusion for all of us. This leads to the inevitable question: how do we best handle trouble when it comes our way. Since trouble is a universal human experience, what are we to do when it breaks into the smooth circle of our living. There are different ways of handling trouble - some good, some bad.

#### SURRENDER WITHOUT A STRUGGLE.

First there is the way of weak surrender. There are those who quit fighting the first time they are wounded. They give up the fight without a struggle. There are those who walk along cheerfully until something trips them, and then they fall flat. And having fallen, instead of rising to renew the struggle, they lie down and whine, and cry about their hard lot in life. They declare that life has been far more cruel to them than it has been to others. They quit fighting the first time they're wounded.

It was this type of a blunder that Miss Havisham made in Charles Dickens' novel, Great Expectations. You'll remember that Miss Havisham was about to be married. All of the guests had arrived. The wedding feast was being prepared. Even the wedding cake was on the table. The bride was all dressed in her wedding gown. And the minister paced the floor nervously waiting for the bridegroom to come. But - alas, the bridegroom never came! Therefore her watch, and every clock in her house were stopped at the hour of her great humiliation, twenty to nine! The hour of her first and only sorrow in life! All sunlight was shut out of the house. She lived in darkness except for a few candles. Her white wedding dress turned to yellow on her shrunken figure. All of her living stopped at twenty minutes to nine, the hour of her tragic disappointment. She quit fighting the first time she was wounded.

There are many people like Miss Havisham. People who give up fighting the first time they're wounded. People who take a little responsibility, and the first time they're criticized they get hurt, and throw everything to one side. People who start out in a profession or a job, and when the going gets a little rough, they give up the struggle. We think of Judas, the disciple. He really made a mess of things. It's true he betrayed Jesus, but the supreme tragedy of his life was that after the deed of treachery, he didn't have what it takes to start over again. He was too cowardly to pick up the shattered pieces of life, and seek forgiveness, and try all over again. He surrendered, and took the coward's way out, a way that is all too common today!

Did you tackle the trouble that came your way  
With a resolute heart and cheerful?  
Or hide your face from the light of day  
With a craven soul and fearful?

You are beaten to earth? Well, well, what's that!  
Come up with a smiling face.  
It's nothing against you to fall down flat,  
But to lie there that's disgrace!

The harder you're thrown, why, the higher you bounce;  
Be proud of your blackened eye.  
It isn't the fact that you're licked that counts;  
It's how did you fight - and why?

And that you be done to the death, what then?  
If you battled the best you could,  
If you played your part in the world of men,  
Why the critic will call it good.

#### SURRENDER TO CYNICISM.

Just as there are those who surrender to trouble without a fight, so there are those who fight and struggle to the extent that their sympathies become hardened, their souls become bitter, and their outlook takes on a note of cynicism. The first is the surrender of the weak. The second is the surrender of the strong. They carry the fight to an objectionable extreme. They over-develop their pugnacity. They come perhaps to view all weakness with scorn and contempt. Their souls, thus hardened, are starved for sympathy.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his novel, Scarlet Letter, introduces us to a person who has allowed tragedy to get the better of him, thus warping his life. Those of you who are familiar with his book will remember that there are three main characters in the story. First, there is Hester Prynne, the prodigal wife. Then there is the young minister, Arthur Dimmesdale, the partner in sin. The third person of the triangle is Roger Chillingworth, the wronged husband. All three sin, and all three suffer. The sin of the woman, you remember, is proclaimed to the world by the baby she holds in her arms as she stands on the pedestal of shame. She suffers a great deal, but her suffering is small in comparison with that young minister who represents in the community the paragon of virtue, and whose sin is unsuspected save by the husband Roger Chillingworth. But the supreme sufferer is probably the wronged husband. And while suffering, he commits perhaps an even greater sin, that of seeking evil revenge. He hangs like a terrible bloodhound upon the track of the man who has wrecked his home. He watches him with fiendish glee. At last he tortures him to the pedestal of shame and compels him to stand where Hester Prynne had once stood seven years before. It's terrible to be a victim of a hate like that, but it is far more terrible to be the possessor of such a hate. Certainly Roger Chillingworth suffered a great wrong in the loss of his wife. But in a sense his greatest loss was in that he allowed this wrong to kill his better self thus making him hard, bitter, cruel, and evil.

#### SURRENDER OF SELF TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF GOD, THE FATHER.

SOME people give in to trouble without a fight. Others allow trouble to

destroy their positive out look on life, and becoming warped, they surrender to cynicism. Neither of these methods are recommended. There is another way of overcoming trouble, and this is found in a surrender of oneself to the fellowship of God, the Father. It is found in a commitment of one's life to religious values. Certainly this was the group to which our friend the psalmist belonged. It is the group which changes loss into gain. It is the group that turns trouble into triumph. It is the group that finds life worthwhile in spite of tragedy. It is the group which has a firm foundation for living. Certainly our world owes a great deal to these people. Sometimes those who have had their hearts broken turn out to be the most helpful, winsome, and useful people we know. They have been schooled in the Garden of Gethsemane, and their want has been changed into great spiritual wealth.

This ability to turn trouble into triumph is one of the finest of all arts. There's little knowledge in life that is of greater value. In order to develop this art in our living, we must first of all believe in the possibility of it.

Centuries ago there was a man by the name of Paul who had a burning desire to preach the gospel in Rome, then the center of the world. But unfortunately Paul was thrown into prison where he remained for many long months. It began to appear that his dream would never be realized. But later on we discover him writing a letter from the prison in which he says some very significant things:

"Now concerning myself, I want you to know my brothers, that what has happened to me, in effect turned out to be to the advantage of the gospel. For, first of all, my imprisonment means a personal witness for his way of life before the Palace guards, not to mention others who come and go."

In other words, the very thing that seemed destined to thwart Paul actually made possible the realization of his dream. We read else where that Paul was afflicted with "a thorn in the flesh". Just what it was we do not know. Some scholars feel that it may have been epilepsy. We do not know for sure, but we do know that Paul prayed constantly for its removal, but his request was never fulfilled. But then later on we discover that even Paul learned to live with his "thorn in the flesh" and came to thank God for it. So constantly did Paul find his losses changed to gain that after long experimentation in the laboratory of life, he reached this great conclusion:

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God"

I feel it's well for us to remember that while God cannot shield us from trouble, he will provide us with the necessary resources to handle it. It's the conviction of those most deeply schooled in the things of the spirit that if we trust him, and remain true and faithful to him, that he will guide us from the darkness to the light. Not only this, but he will make us all the richer for the experience. This was the conviction of Paul. This was the conviction of the Psalmist. Our paths of pain become the roadway to greater spiritual treasure as we surrender ourselves to the fellowship of his spirit.

What a gospel we have to preach! What blessings there are for all those who live in his spirit. Nothing can wreck us so long as we live in the circle of his will. With the storms of life beating against our faces, with disease preying upon our bodies, with puzzling circumstances confronting us, ~~xxxxxx~~ we can still love on undismayed. We can say with the Apostle Paul: "All things work together for good to them that love God" All things! Just think of it! The bitter things as well as the joyful things! The things that make us sad, and the things that make us sing. The things that make us poor, and the things that enrich our living. All things. All things work together for good. I know there are times when we can't understand how it all works. But I feel this very strongly, that if we cling to this conviction, and if we hold fast to this high faith, that someday we too shall be able to say with that psalmist of old:

"Yes.....yes.....yes, it was good for me  
to have been in trouble."

For this is the secret of turning trouble into triumph!

LET US PRAY:

Touch us with the flame of thy spirit.  
Touch us with a consciousness of Thee.  
Touch with, that we may truly live.

In thy name we pray. Amen