

A photograph of Devils Tower, a prominent volcanic rock formation in Wyoming. The tower is a large, dark, cylindrical rock with a flat top, surrounded by a dense forest of evergreen trees. In the foreground, there is a grassy field and a paved road. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

Heavenly training
requires discipline

Devils Tower Wyoming

Heavenly training requires discipline

Life is not the devils tower to dominate us; it's about God's training for our righteousness.

“MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.” It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

Heb 12:5-7

Our heavenly training to live holy lives with God requires earthly discipline in re-education. God's sanctification isn't short sighted; godly training here is needed to prepare us for holiness in heaven. Our minds have to be re-educated in the ways of God. We are no longer our own to do as we please. *'But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.'*

Gal 5:16-17

We must work out the holy life God is working in us; (Phil 2:12-13) to do that we have to put to death what is earthly in us.

Col 3:5-6

Our heavenly Father already sees us as saints in Christ who are purified through Jesus' shed blood. (Col 1:2; Heb. 9:13–14) It is up to us to be what God has done for us, and is doing in us in Christ. The knowledge of what God has already done in us should remind us of the seriousness of harbouring ungodly attitudes that result in sinful deeds.

Knowing that God already sees us as holy should encourage us to live according to what we already are in Christ. This knowledge should also make us aware of the earthly way of thinking that remains in our hearts and make us eager to purge it by the power of the Spirit.

Therefore Peter tells us we are not to be surprised by the trials that come upon us. *'Beloved, don't be astonished at the fiery trial which has come upon you, to test you, as though a strange thing happened to you.'*

1 Pet 4:12

Because there remains more work to do, the discipline of God is necessary because He is not mocked by the intrusion of sin into the world. God made the world for the good and He will have His way in its restoration. Before

the creation of the world God knew all about Satan's rebellion. He also knew of man's choice to follow the temptation of Satan and refuse His sovereign authority to go his way in the world.

Satan thought he could steal Adam's dominion and rule the world by himself, but God is still God and Satan can only do as he wishes up to the point God allows, we see this in the story of Job. (Job 1:12; 2:6) In harmony with His providence God allows the fallen world to be the proving ground for our faith, so that we might walk with Him as our eternal Father.

God is sovereign in all things

The sovereignty of God is absolute and unalterable. *"I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'"*

Isa 46:9-10

Before all things came into being, God had already provided a way of redemption through the cross of atonement by His Son. *'He chose*

us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.'

Eph 1:4-8

Whatever happens in heaven and on earth is because God in His wisdom allows it as part of His providential purpose for our reconciliation. Nothing can prevent His purpose from being fulfilled according to His expectations. This means God uses all things for our good.

In this redemptive plan God uses '*all things on earth or things in heaven,*' the good and the bad, He does this for the ultimate good of those who love Him and are called for His purpose, (Rom 8:28-29) so that we should be like Him according to the image of His Son, "*And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image*

with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit," 2 Cor 3:18

A perfect illustration of how God uses all things for our good is given to us in the life of Joseph who had been sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers, but he encouraged them that God was still in control. *'As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.'* Gen 50:20

While God uses all things for this work of our transformation, (Rom 8:28-29) we only want things that are agreeable to us for our comfort. However God knows what is best so He uses the unacceptable and the disagreeable things we want to avoid, along with the difficult people we meet to be part of our training in holiness. Our Father uses the very things that will clear our pathway to heaven as we live by faith in the midst of all that involves suffering and the unpleasant things of life.

According to God's wisdom, the disagreeable and unwanted things that aggravate us become the proving ground for our faith, without which

man cannot please God. (Heb 11:6) Therefore, without the disagreeable and the unacceptable prodding us forward, there wouldn't be any desire to grow in spiritual maturity and be free from the bondage caused by the man's rebellion against God's sovereign dominion and authority.

The disagreeable things God allows become an opportunity to grow in faith by trusting in God in order that by faith we are transformed into the image of the Son of God. As Christ lived in obedience to the Father, we must also obey all Christ has commanded. John 14:21

Satan schemes but God is in control

While Satan works for our undoing as children of God, God uses his schemes in making us into holy and beloved children who live by faith under His sovereign will and authority. Satan wants us to ignore the sovereignty of God by encouraging us to please ourselves to follow his temptation to deny God. But God is always in control of every painful and disagreeable thing, person, or event, so they can be the very agent of angels in driving us

back into the loving dominion of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

The eternal Son of God, by His sacrifice on the cruel cross of shame, has made life and peace with God both desirable and achievable. In the example of Jesus' suffering that God allowed for our benefit, He faced adversity and a disagreeable and aggravating world bent on His destruction. In His suffering He has provided us with the motivation we need to get right with God, so we can rest in His everlasting care in the face of evil opposition of the world.

Faith in Jesus Christ during our experience of the disagreeable will mean we are not blind to the ways of the world; for Jesus has promised that those who believe in Him will not walk in darkness but have the light of life with God.

John 8:12

Sin begins in the heart of self-rule

Sin is not just our bad behaviour; sin comes from an bad natural disposition towards God. This disposition has a natural tendency to be free of God's will, and resists His sovereign

authority so we can please ourselves. *'Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.'* Judges 21:25

The sin of living independently from God is walking in the darkness, and this means living without hope and the intimate knowledge of the love of God. *"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil."* John 3:19

This sinful disposition infects all mankind who have not been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Independence from God's sovereignty is indeed the very heart of sin that causes all human misery, because it will not obey God in all things, as revealed in the obedient life of His Son Jesus Christ, therefore we must suffer. The heart that is independent of God is unable to walk by the Spirit and is called the flesh. *'For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.'* Rom 8:6-8

The real problem is the independent mindset we often cherish, not the outcome in wrong actions that are the result of not being right with God. Our wrong actions stem from an incorrect relationship with God. Growth in holiness requires the mindset that is being redirected by having to endure all that God allows as He works all things for our good in Jesus Christ.

Jesus shows us a the way of obedience

Jesus shows us the right way to live in relationship with God. Jesus came to restore mankind to the unity of the relationship with God that is experienced by the Father and the Son, this intimate way of knowing God is eternal life.

John 17:3

To achieve our salvation from the condemnation of our rebellion, Jesus had to obediently die to the sin of independence in our place, that through our repentance we might be forgiven and be born again into unity with the Father and the Son by the Spirit of God. Jesus lived a sinless life because He was never independent of God's divine will for Him and

us. Jesus' obedience meant that He was completely dependent on the Father.

Examples of Jesus' dependence on God "*I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*" (John 5:30) "*I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*"
John 6:38

The will of the Father was the sacrifice of His Son. "*He was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And when He is killed, after three days He will rise.'*"
Mark 9:31

In His death on the cross, Jesus suffered the fullest separation from God that is possible, by becoming sin for us. He came to willingly die a sinful death as the consequence of man's rebellious independence, so we can be united with the Father in heaven. Our repentance and turning from self rule is needed to gain the benefit of His sacrifice, and this requires our

death to self interests to live exclusively for the interest of God.

Jesus came to give us a new heart for God

Jesus came to save sinners by giving them a new heart for God. He calls everyone to give their lives sacrificially to God in order to receive His life from God. *And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"*

Luke 9:23-25

The ability to live with a heart devoted to God is only possible when we offer ourselves daily as a living sacrifice, (Rom 12:1-2) in order to live by the leading of the Spirit of God, (Rom 8:14) who enables the renewing of our mind so that we can perceive the mind of Christ and live for God.

In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus gives us instructions on how we are to live by

faith in obedience to God. He begins by saying "*blessed are those who mourn*" He wasn't talking about the sorrow of someone dying, He was talking about our sorrow as we realise how we have been dead to God in doing what we liked in spite of God. When we step in to demand our rights when we experience a difficult situation, we are placing ourselves in the place of God who has all our rights because Jesus has purchased us with the precious price of His blood.

1 Cor 6:20

When Jesus instructed us about how we must live, He didn't give space for us to ignore what He taught. He said: "*You are the light of the world.*" (Matt 5:14) "*I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court.*" (Matt 5:22) "*I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.*"

Matt 5:39

Our responsibility to act on what He commanded is reinforced in His commission to go and make disciples. "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the*

Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you."

Matt 28:19-20

A new heart comes after our death with Christ

When the Bible talks of us taking our place with Christ and His cross, it means we have been separated from the world by dying with Christ to live for God. *'Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.'*

Rom 6:3-4

Therefore God is the only one we must look to when faced with the difficult situations He allows for the testing and proving of our faith in Him. Abraham is known as the father of the people of faith because God tested him severely and he still trusted in God. *'By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son.'*

Heb 11:17

Faith must be proved by adversity

As Abraham was tested in the process of living before God, we are also tested to prove our faith in God's eternal values. If we believe in God we are a new creation in Christ, and we are included in the household of faith while He is refining us in the everyday rough and tumble of the fallen world.

Our concerns are for His way of glory in suffering. *'For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.'*

1 Pet 2:21-24

'And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and

hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.'

Rom 5:3-5

Unlike Abraham we have God in us

Since God lives in us, (Gal 2:20) we should never be anxious about the ways of the imperfect world, or resist the test God places before us. Our God is perfectly able to sustain us in all things because we are His children who live in His light.

If we don't believe God is in control in all things, we will want to bend things we don't like to our will, and ignore the will of our God. We will live as if this world is our home instead of knowing we are no longer of the world but belong to the kingdom of God, and heaven is now our home. *'Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.'* James 1:2-4

We often mistake the test for a challenge

Sometimes it's not that we go out of our way to deliberately sin, but that we have a habit of taking our lives out of the hands of God as an impulse of the flesh to make our own way. Too often the mind of those in the household of faith is oriented to the way of the flesh, because we have forgotten that we are reborn to live according to the Spirit who now gives us life. Since belief determines our behaviour, it would appear that there is a shortfall in believing what the Lord has done for us on the cross.

If God isn't our first thought and desire, we have seated ourselves in His place of honour. Instead of complaining about the difficult and the disagreeable things of life, we should be giving thanks in all things, (1 Thess 5:18) for all the difficult things we face in the world are the steps we need to climb to glory and eternal peace with God.

Testing is God's way of preparing us for heaven

Since we are going home to glory, Jesus has taught us that charity starts at home. He also

indicated that true worship is doing things pleasing to God. Our greatest lesson as God's children takes place at home and in our local community. It's easy to be undisturbed by people who aren't close to our heart, but the heart is where we are disturbed by the disagreeable things and people who upset our peace and comfort.

When we are prepared to be as resolute in accepting the path God has chosen for us at home, in the same way Christ accepted the way of the cross; then we will know the fellowship of His Spirit, so that the fruit of the Spirit can be a witness to the world that life in Christ is indeed a life of grace and peace. The greatest lessons to be learnt are those we experience by living with people who have a different understanding of God and resist our message; but they can be a means of great blessing because God lives in us to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Children of light don't react to darkness

To be faithful we will see the darkness and remain in the light because we are children of

light. As children of God following the example of Christ, the difficult and obstinate people we meet have to be endured with grace, with a spirit of forgiveness, since Christ lives in us so we can show forth His light.

How do we respond to the rebellious? *'Let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.'*

1 Peter 3:4

We may not be able to teach people close to us about the truth of Christ, but He can use them to teach us how His indwelling makes up for what is lacking in others, as He transforms our life by His Spirit, so that His love, joy, goodness, gentleness, patience, kindness, and longsuffering and forgiveness reflect His life to the world. Growth in holiness must take place where we live with God in the fallen world.

'And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image

of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.' Rom 8:28-29

No one else but God can give us the love that fills us with thankfulness when we surrender to the Lordship of Christ who lives in us wherever we are. He makes up tenfold for what we find lacking in the world, so we can love others as He loves us. The Spirit is leading us to live the life of Christ who lives in us, so that we may be filled up to the fullness of His love. Eph 3:19

We need to keep our focus on Jesus Christ

When we are getting concerned about our rights, we are wrong. We have died to the world in Christ to live with God, who is always right and is always big enough for every situation. We get disturbed when we forget Him, then He becomes small in our affairs and we suffer in the darkness of our own making.

The change God is working in us by encouraging our self denial is accompanied with His peace. (John 14:27) With Christ God's love becomes our love and enables us to commune with Him while we learn to rely on

Him and stop looking to people who may be struggling to obey just as we struggle.

We have to remember that in His dealing with our spiritual growth God isn't fixing the darkness out there in the world, but dealing with the darkness within us, so we can know His love and take His light out into the darkness as our witness to Jesus Christ. Knowing this perfect plan of God means we can give thanks for difficult people and all situations as God's gift for our good. Peace isn't possible on the outside in the world because of sin; peace is only possible in the heart of those who trust in God and show that the only way to live is by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, giving thanks for all things without complaining.

Phil 2:14

Paul tells us that we are to do all things without grumbling; *'Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.'* (Phil 2:14-15) Why then do we grumble without ceasing?

Don't we understand that grumbling is not only showing our displeasure at not having something we don't have, but it is also a sign we feel our rights have been denied. In the bigger picture of God's sovereign will, it is our way of showing we don't believe God is working for us. Grumbling shows we are listening to other voices rather than God.

When we fail to remember God we react to the difficult things in the world, and we suffer as if we have a sharp stone in our shoe. The stone in the shoe happens because of the old way of thinking; take the shoes off. We shouldn't put new wine in old wineskins. If we do we are trying to live the new life in the framework of the old. We need to scuttle the old ideas about ourselves on which we place too much importance, and believe God who has made all things new. We must refuse to be defined by self pity and feelings of precaution; all things are made new, this means all. Our shoes hurt because they don't fit our life anymore. In some ways we still believe the old story more than believing the new. We are not our history, that's history, it belongs at the cross with the

dead self of the darkness; we are now a child of the light with a new future in the kingdom of God.

There is always the danger our testimony can interfere with our destiny in Christ; if that is the case we must burn it, otherwise we are prone to be like Lot's wife; we must never look back, it's not worth the painful consequences. As a child of God we don't have to fight for our survival, that life went to the cross, we have been raised up with a new life, just believe God, we are under new management, our new Master is in this for our benefit. We have been made new so Jesus Christ can shine through us.

We are to be the same person when things are going well and when things are disagreeable. God has told us we have died with Christ so we can live with Him; we just have to live in recognition of this reality in order to live His life of love and peace so we can have His power over sin and remain in His love, allowing His life to manifest through us.

How so? The Lord Jesus said "*love your enemies*" in this He is surely speaking of the

love He has poured out into us. And if we are to love our enemies, surely this means our unruly and disobedient friends, along with our sometimes difficult wives and husbands?

Because of God's work in us, we should know something of the grief of the Spirit when we react in disagreeable situations, because we add our darkness to the unpleasantness that resists God, and our witness to the light of Christ is extinguished, and the true church is seen as undesirable to a people in need. If we are not working out the will of God, we are vagabond, and a gypsy, and the life of Christ is not evident where it should be a witness to Him.

We are responsible for our part

We have the responsibility to follow God's plan for our transformation. God doesn't do our part of the work because God is working on our hearts so we can do our bit. *'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.'* (Phil 2:12-13) We must take the responsibility of developing the habit of working out God's plan in us if we are to

know the reality of His peace. *"The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You."*
Isa 26:3

Jesus said: *"My kingdom is not of this world."* (John 18:36) The kingdom of God means Christ living in us as King in the ordinary events of the everyday life. Our faith can only grow by following His example of kingdom living by obeying the Spirit in the difficult places, so that Christ lives in us to do the will of God. We are born again in His likeness, filled with His light, baptised by the His Spirit to be holy as He is holy. The old has passed away, there is no longer a need for feelings of abandonment, there is no more need to be frustrated when things don't go our way. Now we live in the unfading love and grace of God. Rom 8:39

We have good examples of faith to follow

When Abraham was faced with the prospect of sacrificing his son, it would appear to be a very disagreeable and unpleasant thing to do. When the Son of God was faced with death on the cross, it surely would have been disagreeable enough for Him to say, *"My Father, if it is*

possible, let this cup pass from Me." But He did not avoid the difficult so that we can live. *"yet not as I will, but as You will."* Matt 26:39

If we believe God's Spirit dwells in us as the life of Christ, our testing will confirm our faith, and the qualities of the Spirit's life of *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*, (Gal 5:22-23) will be our response to living in the darkness as we represent God.

If we choose to ignore the indwelling Christ, and we respond as we would in the past to disagreeable and unpleasant things with anger, resentment, grumbling, unfaithfulness, and selfishness; then we stand in rebellion once again as if we have never known God, and behave as reprobate degenerates. Friends, God is God to us, or we are not fair dinkum about walking as His children who delight to do His will in all things. Our joy is not dependent on our circumstances, but on our relationship with Jesus Christ.

We can blame Satan for the woes of the world and shovel all our responsibility onto him, or we can accept that Satan can only have his way

when we give way to his lies about us. Our Father has ensured we are not without ample ability to resist the devil, and if we are tempted He gives us a way out; *'No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.'* 1 Cor 10:13

God's discipline is beneficial so we can live the new life He has created for us, but we can only do this as we put off the old life we lived in the flesh. Our God uses the world to confront us with what remains of the world in us. *'It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?'* Heb 12:7

This is the correct response to adversity by the mature who are disciplined in their faith. *'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'* Phil 4:4-7

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

Contents compiled by

Robert C May

Copyright © 2019

cometotheriver@optusnet.com.au

www.cometothestream.com

Devils Tower

God's opportunity