

# Response to Suffering

by Alan Redpath

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*The most important effect of adversity is not its outcome on the world or others, but its outcome in our own lives, as we are conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ.*

**Scripture:** Romans 8:29, Philippians 1:19

**Topics:** "Suffering", "Transformation through Adversity"

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## Description

Alan Redpath emphasizes that the true impact of suffering is not on others but on our own lives, shaping us to be more like Jesus Christ. He reflects on Paul's imprisonment, illustrating how adversity can bring us closer to God and magnify Christ through our actions, regardless of our circumstances. Redpath challenges us to consider how our experiences affect our relationship with Jesus and our ability to bless others, urging us to embrace God's purpose even in hardship. He highlights that true fulfillment comes from being willing to submit to God's will, whether in life or death, as Paul did. Ultimately, the sermon calls for personal reflection on how suffering has transformed us and our faith.

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## Transcript

The most important effect of any adversity is not its outcome on the world or upon other Christians, but its outcome in your own life. We are not saved in order to be a blessing to other people--you will be that inevitably--but primarily we are saved in order to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ, God's Son. In order to fulfil that purpose, God will put His children through any fire if only He may mould and fashion them and make them what He wants them to be--like Jesus. Everyone of us, without exception, as we apply these words to our own lives, would support the statement I have made because what you have gone through has either hardened you or melted you.

What has Paul to say about this? I find it very wonderful and challenging. His surroundings were hostile, his plans in confusion, his missionary campaign checked, but that wasn't everything. Behind all this scene there was God's unchanging and eternal purpose, and therefore, Paul says, "I know this shall turn to my salvation" (v. 19). . . . "This humiliation, this agony, this apparent frustration, being chained to somebody I can't stand, this proximity to any enemy, so much so that even when I pray I am not alone--" Have you thought about that? Paul knew nothing about a quiet time alone. All his time was in the company of a man manacled to him: "--This imprisonment has actually been part of the way in which God's great purpose for my life is being fulfilled. As always, Christ shall be magnified in my body."

In my body? Yes, my lips shall speak of Him. Magnified by my hands which even in prison can serve Him. Magnified by my feet which even here, within the limited space at my disposal, can run His errands. Magnified by my shoulders which gladly submit to this burden and bear it for Jesus' sake. Christ shall be magnified in my body. "For in this experience I have learned," says Paul, "to be willing for all the will of God." Hallelujah--anyway!

. . . . That is what imprisonment had done. It had brought Jesus near.

Have your experiences had that effect, to make the Savior who was only at a distance to be brought wonderfully near? Paul did not know whether he would escape or not, but he was determined to magnify Christ whether by life or by death. In that desperate experience death had taken on a totally new meaning. Had it been left to his choice, he would rather die immediately. "It would be gain for me, because it would be to depart to be with Jesus, and that is far better." Don't let that phrase pass. "To depart" is one thing; even more wonderful, it is to be with Jesus.

"If you leave it to my choice," says Paul, "with all my heart I long for death. But perhaps it isn't God's will for me. For me to abide in the flesh is more needful for you, my beloved Philippians. I am prepared to sink every personal preference, even my longing to see Jesus face to face, if by my staying a little longer I can be a blessing."

"What I have gone through." Have you been applying it personally as a message from God to your own soul? How have you come out of it all? What effect has it had upon the unsaved around you? What effect is it having upon Christian people? But most of all, what effect is it having in you? (Learning to Live, pp. 124-26).

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