

Title: PROSPERITY OUT OF ADVERSITY

Text: Ecclesiastes 7:14

Intro: Every man or woman God used greatly was first put through a test in preparation and training for the best plan God had for them. God can bring good out of evil for the person who loves Him and seeks to do His will. Life on earth will always be filled with opposite events. Let us consider eight Bible men to see how good things came out of their trials:

1. **JACOB**. Jacob fled from his murderous brother Esau. He slept on stones for pillows and in a vision he saw the Lord on top of a ladder leading to heaven (**Gen. 28:11-13**). Then, he called the place Bethel for there he received promises from God. There Jacob also vowed to make the Lord his God (**Gen. 28:18-21**). Jacob suffered years of oppression in the hands of Laban, his own father-in-law, but later grew into a tribe which multiplied to become the nation of Israel (**Gen. 32:27-28**).

2. **JOSEPH**. After being mistreated by his brethren, unjustly accused by his master, and spending years in jail, Joseph found that God was preparing him for the palace to do a mighty work of saving many lives (**Psa. 105:17-21**). He became 2nd-in-charge over Egypt. Pharaoh changed his name to **Zaphnath-Paaneah** (**Gen. 41:45**) meaning "*Revealer of secrets and Saviour of the world*" Joseph's adversities and later exaltation were a wonderful picture of Jesus Christ's suffering and glory.

3. **MOSES** (**Exo. 2-4**). He lived to be 120 years. He spent his early years as a prince in Pharaoh's palace; many more years a lowly shepherd in the wilderness; 40 years as a great prophet serving God and leading Israel from Egyptian bondage; receiving the Ten Commandments; writing the Pentateuch; and learning God's Great Name "**I AM**" (**Exo. 3:14-15**).

4. **DAVID** (**I Sam. 17:43-50**). Goliath insulted the Israelite army for 40 days. God used the lad David to overturn Goliath's mocking and defeat the Philistine army by granting a great miraculous victory for Israel. Subsequently, David experienced great suffering in being chased by Saul for many years through the wilderness and mountains. One day God turned David's suffering to great joy when he was crowned King (**II Sam. 5:3**). David became the standard of all kings that followed him.

5. **ELIJAH**. (I Kgs. 18-19) Following a major victory, Elijah fled to the wilderness after being threatened with death by Jezebel. God helped Elijah by sending the Angel of the Lord to encourage him; giving him a new ministry and a new friend and helper in Elisha to carry on his work; as well as a chariot ride to heaven without seeing physical death! (II Kgs. 2:11)

6. **JOHN**. While banished to the isle of Patmos, John was given a revelation of heaven, the end of the world, and of eternity (Rev. 1:9). John's exile on Patmos, which seemed like a bad fate, led to a very good outcome--the writing of the book of Revelation. This book has given hope to millions of believers. It has edified believers about prophetic events like the ultimate defeat of Satan and the victory of Christ at His coming.

7. **PAUL**. Paul's wilderness experience led to great blessings. He spent 3 years in the Arabian Desert to learn directly from the risen Lord (Gal. 1:11-12, 17), which helped him in his preaching, in writing Epistles to the churches, and in his missionary journeys in the following years. Paul's years of sacrifice, suffering, persecution on his journeys and in jail (II Cor. 11:21-30), led to – many Christian churches started; 14 NT books written (including Hebrews) which have blessed millions of souls. In becoming a good example himself, Paul inspired much soul winning and missionary endeavors.

8. **JESUS**. In Luke 4:1-2 the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil for 40 days and 40 nights. The result of His extraordinary victory over Satan was fame, glory and the teaching of God's word with power (Luke 4:14-15; 31-32). Jesus knew that the terrible suffering on the cross that He was to endure would lead to His glorious resurrection, ascension, and final victory over sin and Satan!

Conclusion: Friend, God often leads people through hardships and periods of testing in preparation for a far better and greater services or blessings. As the saying goes, **no cross, no crown!** Whatever bad things are happening to you right now, even while remaining true and faithful to the Lord and His word, be assured that He can overrule the bad situation and bring good things out of them (Rom. 8:28). Have you fully trusted in Jesus Christ as your own Lord and Saviour?