

APRIL 22

*If God intended for all the days of your life to be easy, they would be.
No, in grace, he intends for your days to be his tools of refinement.*

I am deeply persuaded that many of us struggle with questions of God's goodness, faithfulness, and love, not because he has been unfaithful to any promise in any way, but because **we simply are not on his agenda page**. Our agenda, our definition of what a good God should give us, is a life that is comfortable, pleasurable, and predictable; one in which there's lots of human affirmation and an absence of suffering. But consider God's agenda, as it's revealed in the following passages:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

In this you **rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials**, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 1:6-7)

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, **but we rejoice in our sufferings**, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Rom. 5:1-5)

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. **For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him**, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. (Phil. 3:7-9)

The message is consistent throughout all of these passages. God is not working to deliver to you your personal definition of happiness. If you're on that agenda page, you are going to be disappointed with God and you are going to wonder if he loves you. **God is after something better—your holiness**, that is, the final completion of his redemptive work in you. The difficulties you face are not in the way of God's plan, they do not show the failure of God's plan, and they are not signs he has turned his back on you. No, **those tough moments are a sure sign of the zeal of his redemptive love**.

For further study and encouragement: 1 Peter 4:12-19