

NEW SERIES: CHOOSE FAITH NOT FEAR

“Trials Build our Faith”
James 1:2 - 4

Big Idea – Faith grows better through pain than from pleasure.

*2 Thess. 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because **your faith grows exceedingly**, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other*

2 Thess. 1:4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,

1. Hearing the Bible

*Romans 10:17 "Faith comes from hearing the word of God." So the more you get into this book, the more you're going to grow in faith. If you don't ever read the Bible, you're not going to grow much faith. Why? This is the spiritual food that builds the muscle. How? because it increases our **confidence in the character of God***

--The more we discover about the character of God, the more confidence we gain...the more trust we build...the more our faith is enlarged.

2. Responding correctly to trials and testing

James 1:2 – 4 Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. 3For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything.

2 Thess. 1:4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,

1 Peter 1:7 "These trials are only to test your faith and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold. It will bring you much praise and honor on the day of His return." God will use difficulties to test your faith.

Oswald Chambers said, "The basis of human life is tragedy. It is difficult to realize this until one gets through the experiences that are on the surface of life, and we discover we are built with a bigger capacity for pain than for joy, that the undertone of all our life is sorrow, and the great expression and revelation of God in the world is the revelation of the Cross, not of joy..."

Gordon MacDonald in his book *The Life God Blesses* calls trials "**disruptive moments**" and defines them as "those unanticipated events, most of which, one would usually have chosen to avoid, had it been possible." He goes on to say, "We don't like disruptive moments; they are too often associated with pain and inconvenience, failure and humiliation. Not that they have to be, but that seems the way of the human condition."

This sentiment is echoed almost exactly by the words of Malcom Muggeridge who said, "As an old man...looking back on one's life, it's one of the things that strikes you most forcibly - that the only thing that's taught one anything is suffering. Not success, not happiness, not anything like that. The only thing that really teaches one what life's about - the joy of understanding, the joy of coming in contact with what life really signifies - is suffering, affliction."

The Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote about his time in prison, "It was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed with myself the first stirrings of good...So bless you prison, for having been in my life."

David Jeremiah wrote of a time in 1994 when he experienced a **disruptive moment** in his life that came out of nowhere - he was diagnosed with a life threatening cancer, and he said that it was one of the most instructive times in his life.

Paul the apostle speaks of this about himself in 2 Cor. 12:7 – 10.

I don't want anyone to think more highly of me than what they can actually see in my life and my message, 7even though I have received wonderful revelations from God. But to keep me from getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from getting proud.

8 Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. 9 Each time he said, "My gracious favor is all you need. My power works best in your weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may work through me. 10 Since I know it is all for Christ's good, I am quite content with my weaknesses and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The Message puts it like this:

7 Because of the extravagance of those revelations, and so I wouldn't get a big head, I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees. No danger then of walking around high and mighty! 8 At first I didn't think of it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. Three times I did that, 9 and then he told me,

My grace is enough; it's all you need.

My strength comes into its own in your weakness.

Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness. 10 Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size—abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get, the stronger I become.

Notice these principles about how God uses disruptive moments or trials in our lives.

1. The Purpose –

To train us, mature us, make us more Christ like – vs. 7, and vs. 4 in James 1

Disappointments are Divine Appointments

"This Thing is From Me" by Laura Barter Snow

"THIS THING IS FROM ME" By Laura A. Barter Snow

[written as if from the Lord Himself, based on biblical principles and promises]

My Child, I have a message for you today; let me whisper it in your ear, that it may gild with glory any storm clouds which may arise, and smooth the rough places upon which you may have to tread.

It is short--only five words--but let them sink into your inmost soul; use them as a pillow upon which to rest your weary head: "THIS THING IS FROM ME."

Have you ever thought of it, that all that concerns you, concerns ME, too? for "he that touches you, touches the apple of His eye"(Zech. 2:8).

I would have you learn, when temptations assail you, and the "enemy comes in like a flood," that this thing is from Me: that your weakness needs My might, and your safety lies in letting Me fight for you.

You are very "precious in My sight" (Isa. 43:4). Therefore it is my special delight to educate you.

Are you in money difficulties? Is it hard to make both ends meet? This Thing Is from Me, for I am your purse-bearer, and would have you draw from and depend upon Me. My supplies are limitless (Phil. 4:19). I would have you prove my promises. Let it not be said of you, "In this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God" (Deut. 1:32).

Are you in difficult circumstances, surrounded by people who do not understand you, who never consult your taste, who put you in the background? This thing is from Me. I am the God of circumstances. Thou camest not to thy place by accident: it is the very place God meant for thee. Have you not asked to be made humble? See, then, I have placed you in the very school where the lesson is taught; your surroundings and companions are only working out MY will.

Are you passing through a night of sorrow? This thing is from Me. I am the "Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." I have let earthly comforts fail you, that turning to Me, you may obtain everlasting consolation (II Thess. 2:16,17).

Has some friend disappointed you? One to whom you opened out your heart? This thing is from Me. I have allowed this disappointment to come, that you may learn that:

"The best friend to have is Jesus;
He will hear you when you call,

He will keep you lest you fall,
The best friend to have is Jesus."

I want to be your confidant. Has someone repeated things about you that are untrue? Leave them to Me, and draw closer to Me, thy shelter out of reach of "the strife of tongues," for "I will bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noonday." (Psalm 37:6).

Have your plans been upset? Are you bowed down and weary? This thing is from Me, You made your plans, then came asking me to bless them; but I would have you let Me plan for you, and then I take the responsibility ; for "This thing is too heavy for thee, Thou art not able to perform it thyself alone." (Ex 18:18). You are only an instrument, not an agent.

Have you longed to do some great work for Me, and instead been laid aside on a bed of pain and weakness? This thing is from Me. I could not get your attention in your busy days, and I want to teach you some of My deepest lessons. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Some of My greatest workers are those shut out from active service, that they may learn to wield the weapon of all prayer.

Are you suddenly called upon to occupy a difficult and responsible position? Launch out on Me. I am trusting you with "the possession of difficulties," and for "This thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works and in all thou puttest thy hands unto" (Deut. 15:10)

This day I place in your hands this pot of holy oil; make use of it freely, my child. Let every circumstance as it arises, every word that pains you, every interruption that would make you impatient , every revelation of your own weakness, be anointed with it! Remember, "interruptions are divine instructions." The sting will go as you learn to see Me in all things. Therefore "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, for it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life, and through 'this thing' ye shall prolong your days in the land" (Deut. 32:46,47). Laura A. Barter Snow

2. The Pain - vs. 7., 8, 9

Progress without Pain is Not Possible

We live in a skin-deep world that emphasizes clothing, fashion, makeup, plastic surgery, tummy tucks and nose jobs. Although there may be nothing wrong with any of these, they are just cosmetic. Character and substance are shaped in the crucible of adversity.

No pain, no gain.

Ron Mehl in his book, *Surprise Endings* says, "The storms or trials of life, always leave us with a list of things to clean up and fix. They are times when God restores to us the things we lose through negligence, ignorance, rebellion, or sin. For the Christian, storms are a no-lose

proposition. They help us to see and acknowledge the loose shutters, missing shingles and rotten fence posts in our lives while turning us back to the only One who can make the necessary repairs."

One of God's methods for directing His children's steps is through drying up resources: a job loss, a career change, or a disaster. In these times we are willing to listen more intently, and to seek God in ways we would not normally do.

C.S. Lewis once wrote, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." [C.S.Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1962)]

3. The Provision - vs. 9

The Promise of God is the Provision of Grace

Sufficient – more than enough

More power – 2 Cor. 12

More fruit – John 15

4. The Product - Proper Perspective produces Powerful Growth

Not Why is this happening to me? but What is God trying to teach me?

AFFLICTED, YET RADIANT -true stories of God's perspective producing growth.

Again I quote from Ron Mehl's book, [Surprise Endings](#)

She grew up around the coal mines where her daddy worked, deep in the mountainous regions of Virginia. She came from a large poverty stricken family, so she learned how to be content with little. Dad and Mom were poor by the world's standards, but as a kid growing up, I did not know it. We were rich in so many other ways. Dad had two or three jobs, so Mom could stay home and be a full time mommy to her five children.

She hummed softly as she went about her work. It was as if she had blocked all the bad news out and was contemplating what was good and right and lovely. She was always living in the present, fondly reflecting the past, and looking forward to the future. She found that in the present there was love, in the past there was joy, and in the future there was hope.

I will not forget the day the doctors told us that Mom had terminal cancer. I was devastated by that news. Things did not seem to change for Mom, though. When I visited her she was busy cooking or baking, doing a load of clothes, or sewing or working on something else. As she worked, she hummed a tune that seemed so beautiful to me.

I will never forget when I spoke with her about the cancer. She was so calm. She told me that this was not really her home. She said she had a home in Heaven and that she would be going there soon. She told me not to worry, that she would be all right. Although that brought tears to my eyes, she continued to hum. I saw a beauty in my mother that I had never seen before. In her affliction she had become radiant.

When she died, she was 59 years old. I have replayed her words many times: "This is not my home. I have a home in Heaven. I'll be all right." She is at her eternal home today.

Jeanne McPhail from Oklahoma said:

Here's one reply: "Two years ago, the darkest period of my life started. First, my 23-year-old son died, then my father became terminally ill with cancer. My husband was also facing some very serious health issues.

I didn't feel that the sun would ever shine again. But here I am, almost two years later, to say that his grace is sufficient for us. He has brought so much good -- a deeper understanding of who he is, a greater peace, a greater joy, and more opportunities to minister to others.

The light of his love is greater than any darkness this world can produce. We've grown during this period of night. I would never have chosen it, but now I thank God for it. Behind every storm cloud is a silver lining. And his blessings continue."