

Perfecting Faith Through Suffering: “For When I Am Weak, Then I Am Strong”



[My good friend, Debra King, an Admin on the [Little Flock](#) site on Facebook, posted this very powerful message. She had saved it, but doesn't know who originally wrote it. If the original author will contact me (at steve@HaveYeNotRead.com) I'll be happy to give credit where credit is due. The message is too powerful not to pass along – especially for those, who might be going through a period of suffering, affliction or infirmity.]

Here's the message:

2nd Corinthians 12:10 -- Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: **for when I am weak, then am I strong.**

A man recently asked me what the Bible meant by the statement, “For when I am weak, then am I strong.” Interestingly, I had been thinking about the same exact Scripture myself the few days before. It's amazing how the Holy Spirit works. I would like to now share with you what I shared with this gentleman.

“Faith” cannot grow without trials. If our faith is to increase, then we must go through living H-E-double-toothpicks (HELL) to get there. One's faith CANNOT increase without problems, trials and hardships. When a person asks God for more faith, that person is asking for an increased burden. It is the increased burden that strengthens me to carry a heavier burden down the road. Unshakable faith comes from having your faith shaken.

As believers, we must learn to recognize the burdens upon us in life as blessings from the Lord. Nothing can happen in my life without God's permission (God's permissive will). Knowing this fact, we should trust upon the Lord and rely upon His wisdom and guidance.

If we are to please God, we must have "faith" as Hebrews 11:6 teaches. *We cannot please God without faith.* To have more faith, we must have our faith shaken because unshakable faith comes from having our faith shaken! Do you want more faith? Then God must cause you to suffer.

Luke 17:5 -- And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

The disciples had no idea what they were asking for. Faith can only be increased through hardships and trials.

The disciples had many obstacles coming their way, eventually they would all be martyred for Christ. Peter could not have preached the sermon on Pentecost as he did, if it were not for the times when his faith was tested. Peter at one time denied even knowing Christ; but Peter didn't stay down, he got up.

God is pleased when we get back up after a fall, but He is even more pleased when we "hang-in-there," serving the Lord while the burdens become increasingly heavy in our life. It takes a greater faith to keep going when the going gets tough. Our weakness is actually our strength...

2nd Corinthians 12:9-10 -- And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

It is during the troublesome times of our life that we will be forced to place a greater faith in God if we are to continue serving Him. Many believers quit and give up on the Christian life. They never do anything for God. They stop telling others about their wonderful Savior. They are NOT "soul-conscious."

As I mentioned earlier, I find no teaching about "degrees" of faith in the Bible, you either have faith or you don't. God does not require any certain amount of faith, just faith! Some people may have a stronger faith than others, but it is faith—not a higher degree of faith—just good old faith.

A believer with greater burdens will have to have a greater faith to make it through, but it is not a "degree" or "level" of faith, it is simply faith. What I am trying to say is that God does NOT require a certain level of faith to save us nor to answer our prayers, He only requires *child-like faith*.

2nd Corinthians 12:9 -- And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

The Apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh, given to him by God to keep him humble. Paul asked God three times to remove the thorn, but God refused. We don't know what the thorn was except that it was a "messenger of satan." Some believe that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was bad eye-site, since Paul used other men (such as Timothy) to write some of his books. The Bible does not specify.

Paul eventually figured out the reason for the thorn (weakness) in his life, because God wouldn't remove it. We don't know what Paul's thorn was, but Paul knew, and he realized that his "thorn" was being used by God to keep him humble.

Notice that the Bible says satan sent a messenger to buffet Paul. That is very interesting. God wanted to keep Paul humble. God was using the Apostle Paul immensely and the temptation existed for Paul to become proud. It would have been easy for Paul to become elevated in his own eyes. So, God allowed satan to afflict Paul, with what the Bible calls "a messenger of satan."

2nd Corinthians 12:7 -- And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

The Greek word for "messenger" in 2nd Corinthians 12:7 is *aggelos* and means "to bring tidings; a messenger; especially an 'angel'; by implication a pastor."

The Bible teaches that God allowed satan to afflict Job's health. So, Paul's thorn in the flesh could have been a bodily affliction. We do not know for certain. Albeit we do know that God intended for the affliction to keep Paul humble. Paul had been used greatly by God and the temptation existed for self-glorification. Paul said that Satan sent a messenger, which God allowed to keep Paul humble, and it certainly did. I know that my own bodily afflictions keep me humble, very much so.

Blessings in Disguise

The problems in our life are often blessings in disguise. We must learn to view them from this spiritual point of view. The greater the burden placed upon us, the greater the faith required to "hang-in-there." It takes faith to continue living for God when things turn for the worse in our life. As an example, new muscle in the human body is built (strengthened) by exercising the existing muscle to the point of exhaustion.

Likewise, the exercising of our faith (the trial of it) will make us more mature and stable in the Lord if we will be patient and not give up. Sometimes our faith falters for a while, but the righteous man who falleth seven times rises up again (Proverb 24:16).

I don't know of one Christian who is invincible. The key is to always get back up off the ground, brush the dust off, and do what you can to get back on track for God. Pray and ask God to help you.

Proverb 24:16 -- For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

The Bible teaches that the trials and tribulations in our life are more valuable than gold. In fact, the Bible literally says MUCH MORE PRECIOUS THAN OF GOLD... "much more."

1st Peter 1:7 -- That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ

What an amazing truth. It's hard for me to view my bodily affliction as being much more precious than gold, but that's exactly what the Bible teaches. It is my hope of Heaven that compels me to redeem the time by serving Christ with my life. We all have 24 hours in a day. It is the decisions that we make on a daily basis that defines our life. A man is not defined by what he is, but by what he *does*.

I have learned that my problems are really rainbows in disguise. No, I don't want the problems. However, I cannot always make them go away as soon as I wish I could. Some problems never go away (such as Paul's thorn). Problems are a part of life.

Life is what happens to you while you're making big plans. The world hates God and curses His holy name because of their problems, *but the believer must learn to do the opposite*. We must praise the Lord at all times, not being ignorant of the workings of God. Our weaknesses are really our strengths and our strengths weaknesses. Thank the Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Savior.

Isaiah 48:10 --Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

Zechariah 13:9 -- And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

Malachi 3:2-3 -- But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

God uses and afflictions to refine our faith, like gold and silver are refined and purified in the fire.

I would like to add the following to this great little study:

And just who do we look to for our best example of perfecting faith through suffering? As the beloved St. Paul tells us:

Hebrews 2:10 -- For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Yes, indeed, even Christ Himself, while in the flesh just like us, was perfected through His sufferings. And why?

1 Peter 4:1-2-- Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

It's for your very salvation and consequent eternal life. Never forget that. Christ suffered. And those who partake of His sufferings in this flesh life are likewise to be glorified as He was glorified:

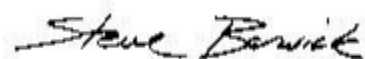
Romans 8:16-17 – The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Finally, let us always remember this:

Romans 8:28 -- And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

That's a promise you can claim, and depend upon, beloved. Even your sufferings and afflictions are designed to work to your good.

Regards in Christ,



Steve Barwick

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