**Keeping the Faith**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Ephesians 6:10-13**

**Sunday Morning**

**February 13, 2022**

**Ephesians 6:10-13**

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

**Many People are Facing Adversity Today**

They may be dealing with financial difficulties or suffering because of rebellious children. Perhaps they are hurting emotionally because of personal betrayal, or physically due to health issues.

Adversity comes in a variety of different forms, but one thing is certain—it will come to each one of our lives sooner or later.

Saints, some people crumble under the pressure of adversity. They become so bitter and resentful toward the Lord that they walk away from His calling on their lives.

Saints, some might even resort to addictive behaviors to try to escape the pain. Others face similar challenges but have a totally different reaction. Instead of weakening them, difficulties make them stronger because these believers learn to depend more fully on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Adversity can either be an overwhelming burden or a bridge to a deeper relationship with God!

**A Burden or a Bridge?**

Saints, no one wants to experience tough times. But when they come our way, we have a choice about how to view them: as a burden or a bridge.

**A burden, spiritually speaking, is a heaviness or weight that depresses us.**

Saints, we may feel weary or discouraged, without joy and peace.

**A bridge, by contrast, is a way to rise above difficulties and develop a more intimate relationship with our heavenly Father.**

Saints, two verses represent the foundation of this bridge to greater intimacy with the Lord.

**Psalm 103:19**

“The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all”

In other words, Saints, God is in control of everything. The second verse is

**Romans 8:28**

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”

Saints, when these two verses are correctly interpreted, they become a bridge that helps us overcome adversities.

**Adversity was a bridge in Paul’s life**

Paul’s life is one of the best biblical examples of how adversity can be a bridge to a deeper relationship with God. This apostle wrote the majority of the New Testament.

Without the revelations the Lord gave him, we would have far less insight into how to live the Christian life. But his closeness to the Father came as the result of loss and hardship. He wrote,

**Philippians 3:8**

“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ”

**Philippians 3:10**

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

Saints, through tribulation and difficulty, Paul learned:

**1. He could know Peace even in Adversity**

Paul said it best:

**Philippians 4:10-13**

11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Saints, God would give him supernatural strength in his weakness. He explained that his weakness allowed the Holy Spirit’s power to work through his life:

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10**

9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**2. The Lord was the Source for all his Needs**

**Philippians 4:19**

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Saints, when we fully rely on the Father, He will provide for us.

**3. He could trust in the Lord’s Faithfulness**

**1 Corinthians 10:13**

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it”

Saints, Paul had learned to depend on the Lord to carry him through any trial.

**4. The Father Valued his Service more than his Desires**

Although Scripture promises that the Lord delights in giving us the desires of our hearts, He will prioritize our character development over our comfort.

**Psalm 37:4**

“Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart”

Saints, instead of satisfying Paul’s inclination toward comfort and ease, God sent adversity to prepare him for greater service (2 Cor. 12:7).

**2 Corinthians 12:7**

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

**5. Even in his Adversity, God would Strengthen his Message**

Saints, because Paul was imprisoned, the entire Roman guard heard the gospel (Phil. 1:13-15). The more adversity we face, the more effective our message will be to others. We have our greatest impact when people watch us go through pain and suffering with our faith intact.

**Philippians 1:13-16**

13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; 14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. 15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will:

**6. It’s important to see everything as coming from God**

Saints, one of the most important lessons the Lord has taught me is that He uses everything, even the wrongs of others, for His purposes in my life.

**2 Corinthians 12:7**

“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure”

**7. God’s Ways are not Our Ways**

**Isaiah 55:8-9**

8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Saints, suffering is often the stimulus to greater closeness with God. We draw near to Him for relief from pain and suffering and, in the process, discover more about how He works.

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10**

9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**8. Adversity Prepared him to Comfort others more Effectively**

Saints, God uses our suffering to prepare us to minister to others.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

We are best equipped to comfort people if we have been through something similar.

**9. God had a specific Purpose for Adversity**

Paul’s thorn had a particular function; it was designed to keep him humble and dependent on God, despite the astounding spiritual revelations he had been given.

**2 Corinthians 12:7**

“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure”

Saints, just like Paul, our trials are designed by God to help us become the people He desires.

**10. We can Rejoice in the Midst of Adversity**

**Philippians 4:4**

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

Saints, we need to always know the Jesus is always in control of our circumstances. This gives us a reason to celebrate.

**In Closing:**

It is likely you are experiencing some type of adversity today. You can try to handle it using your own resources—turning to your friends for advice, doing the best you can, or escaping into hobbies or addictions.

But I guarantee that when it comes to life-changing hardship, such coping mechanisms will ultimately fail. Your adversity will become an overwhelming burden. I pray you will choose to see adversity as a bridge to a deeper relationship with your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

If you are a believer, the awesome power of the Holy Spirit is able to equip and transform you and to carry you through suffering.

Through pain and hardship, He demonstrates how much we need His help. The bridge of adversity can take you to a place of indescribable intimacy with Jesus Christ.

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**