

GOD'S PLAN & YOU (Pt 8 of 9): "DISTRESS AND DIFFICULTY"

THESIS: Let's Live Strong

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

OPEN: (Poem: "Don't Quit")

Poem: "Don't Quit!"

When things go wrong as they sometimes will, When the road you're trudging seems uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high, When you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit...rest if you must, but don't you quit.

Success is failure turned inside out, the silver tint of the clouds of doubt, And you never can tell how
close you are, It may be near when it seems afar, So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit...

It's when things go wrong, That you must not quit!

In **2 Corinthians 12:7-10** let's discover God's plan for how you may live strong despite weaknesses and hard times.

2 Chronicles 32:7b-8 "'Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.' And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said."

1. LET'S LIVE STRONG IN THE LORD ESPECIALLY AMIDST HARDSHIP AND WEAKNESS.

A. **2 Corinthians 12:7-9a** "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.'"

1. *Live strong in the Lord amidst hardship and weakness by pleading (praying) to Him.*

a. **Pleaded** (Greek: *parakaleo*) means to beg, call alongside for help, or urge.

1. **Psalm 5:1-3** "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my sighing. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray. In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before You and wait in expectation."

b. **Application:** Pray for wisdom about your hardship and weakness so you may live strong.

1. **James 1:5-8** "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt—that man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord..."

a. The skillful insight the Lord gives the Apostle Paul about his "thorn in the flesh" was:

1. It was a messenger of satan. The devil is real. He kills, steals, destroys (*Jhn 10:10*).

a. **Satan** (Greek: *satanas*) means adversary.

1. **Numbers 33:55** "If you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will give you trouble in the land where you will live."

2. It was "given me—to keep me from becoming conceited." Its how God redeemed it.

a. **Conceited** (Greek: *huperairo*) means to exalt oneself exceedingly; puffed or blown up with boastful pride.

1. **1 Timothy 3:6** “(An overseer) must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.”
2. **Illustration:** Example of being “blown up” with self is illustrated in books *Being Oscar* and *Casino* regarding sports handicapper and casino manager the late Frank Rosenthal: “He was the kind of man who held out his cigarette and expected it to be lit...After escaping a car bombing with minor injuries he wasn’t as arrogant. It took him down a peg—showed him his mortality.”
3. The grace of the Lord “is sufficient for you, My power is made perfect in weakness.”
 - a. **Grace** (Greek: *charis*) means blessing, favor, or kindness.
 1. The riches and sufficiency of God’s grace to us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3-14):
 2. “Blessed us in heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (v3)
 3. “Chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in His sight” (v4)
 4. “In love predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ” (v5)
 5. “His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves” (v6)
 6. “In Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (v7)
 7. “He made known to us mystery of His will, which He purposed in Christ” (v9-10)
 8. “In Him we chosen—in order we might be for praise of His glory” (v11-12)
 9. “Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, promised Holy Spirit” (v13)
 10. “(The Holy Spirit) is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance” (v14)
 4. Which do you struggle with most in being obedient to God—success or failure?
- B. **2 Corinthians 12:9b-10** “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak then I am strong.”
 1. *Live strong in the Lord amidst hardship and weakness by pleasing (delighting) in Him.*
 - a. **Delight** (Greek: *eudokeo*) means to be well pleased.
 1. **Matthew 5:11-12** “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in Heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”
 - b. **Quote from George Meredith:** “He who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered.”

CONCLUSION: It’s important to boast—not about ourselves—but about God and His power. Pray to Him and delight in Him especially when you experience weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties.

Philippians 4:12-13 “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”

Insight from Jim Rohn: (“Bouncing Back From Tough Times”)

Jim Rohn: “Bouncing Back From Tough Times”

Your limitations or failures can be the building blocks for greatness. A father talks about his daughter’s approach to facing trouble. She’s like a frog in a jar of cream—kicking, kicking, and kicking. Soon the milk turns into a lump of butter and she jump outs. That’s an interesting illustration of tenacity, because that’s how it really works. You’ve got to have enough resolve to do it until.

Some of the most inspiring success stories have started with failure. Longfellow started in failure. Michelangelo started in failure. Lincoln started in failure. Rod Serling wrote 40 stories before he had one that was accepted. Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper that felt he had no talent. Richard Byrd crashed his plane on his first solo trip before he became one of the world’s greatest explorers.

Be grateful for your adversity. At the same time, make sure that it’s working for your future, not against you. Make your failures give birth to great opportunity, not prolonged agony. Make your disgust lead to inspiration, not depression. The world will willingly sit by and let you wallow in your sorrows until you die broke and alone. And here’s what else the world will do. The world will step aside and let you by, once you decide that your present situation is only temporary. Don’t settle for mere existence and self-pity. Make a commitment to excellence.

Acts 20:32 (Apostle Paul to Ephesian church elders) “Now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified (made holy/dedicated).”

CLOSE: Live strong by praying & delighting in Christ especially amid hardship/weakness. It’s God’s plan for you.

