

QUALITY
OF
LIFE
BIBLE
STUDY



Adversity®

COMPILED BY
S.MCRAE

ADVERSITY “Quality of Life Series”

LEADER: How’s your week going? How ‘bout your year?

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

Any unexpected problems crop up?
How’d you handle them?
Did you learn anything from the experience?

American Author/playwright Jean Kerr once said, “If you can keep your head about you when all about you are losing theirs, it’s just possible you haven’t grasped the situation.”

LEADER: Here’s a story of a man who had a particularly bad day (we’ve read before).

From “Laughing’s More Fun with Someone Else” Barbara Johnson’s *Stick a Geranium in Your Hat & Be Happy*

When asked to fill out a group insurance form explaining the many injuries on which he was making a claim, he said:

“I am writing in response to your request concerning Block #1 on the insurance form which asked for the cause of injuries, wherein I put ‘Tryng to do the job alone.’ You said you needed more information, so I trust that the following will be sufficient.

I am a bricklayer by trade, and on the day of injuries, I was working alone, laying brick around the top of a four-story building, when I realized that I had about five hundred pounds of brick left over. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to put them in a barrel and lower them by pulley, which was fastened to the top of the building. I secured the end of the rope at ground level and went up to the top of the building and loaded the bricks into the barrel and flung the barrel; out with the bricks in it. Then I went down and untied the rope, holding it securely to insure the slow descent of the barrel.

As you will note on Block #6 of the insurance form, I weigh 150 pounds. Due to the shock of being jerked off the ground so swiftly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Between the second and third floors, I met the barrel coming down. This accounts for the bruises and lacerations on my upper body. Regaining my presence of mind again I held tightly to the rope and proceeded rapidly up the side of the building, not stopping until my right hand was jammed in the pulley. This accounts for my broken thumb.

Despite the pain, I retained my presence of mind and held tightly to the rope. At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Devoid of the weight of the bricks, the barrel now weighed about fifty pounds. I refer you again to Block #6 and my weight. As you would guess, I began a rapid descent. In the vicinity of the second floor, I met the barrel coming up. This explains the injuries to my legs and lower body. Slowed only slightly, I continued my descent, landing on the pile of bricks. Fortunately, my back was only sprained and the internal injuries were minimal. I’m sorry to report, however, that at this point I again lost my presence of mind and let go of the rope. As you can imagine, the empty barrel crashed down on me.

I trust this answers your concern. Please know that I am finished with trying to do the job alone.

LEADER: What did he learn?

Ask for help!

READER: “Get Some Altitude” By Steve Goodier

Source ~ http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2a/get_some_altitude.htm

Shelly, one of our readers, recently sent me a fascinating story. She tells about a tornado that ripped through the central part of her home state of Oklahoma last spring. Guy, a church pastor, and his wife, Vickie, lived directly in the path of the on-coming storm. They took refuge in a closet in the parsonage.

Guy belongs to a denomination (United Methodist) which is known for moving its pastors frequently, and he was scheduled for a move to a new parish in June. Furthermore, as a church leader, he no doubt encountered any number of storms and conflicts among church members. But a tornado was something else entirely, and hiding in the closet seemed the best course of action for the couple.

After the storm passed, they emerged from their hiding place and were astonished to discover that their closet was the only part of the house left standing! Though they lost everything, they had come through unscathed. As the couple stood in the middle of the debris that used to be their home, Vickie's first comment was: "Wow, Guy! This is wonderful! This will be the easiest move we've ever made!"

Here is a person who knows something about handling difficulties. Sometimes we have to look beyond a problem before we can move forward.

If you have ever flown in a jet on a foggy or cloudy day, you probably know something about looking beyond problems. All seems dark and dreary on the ground. Yet every day is a sunny day if we can only get enough altitude.

Thomas Carlyle put it like this: "What you can see, yet cannot see over, is as good as infinite." Get some altitude and you will be able to see beyond the problem!

LEADER: What did they learn?

It's all about an attitude of altitude!

READER: "Abe"

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon1/abraham.htm>

If you think you have failed, remind yourself of the life story of this man:

- Age 22 - failed in business
- Age 23 - ran for legislature and was defeated
- Age 24 - failed again in Buenos
- Age 26 - sweetheart died
- Age 27 - had a nervous breakdown
- Age 29 - defeated for speaker
- Age 31 - defeated for elector
- Age 34 - defeated for Congress
- Age 37 - elected to Congress
- Age 39 - defeated for Congress
- Age 46 - defeated for Senate
- Age 47 - defeated for vice president
- Age 49 - defeated for Senate
- Age 51 - elected president of the United States

This is the record of Abraham Lincoln. Throughout his life he suffered many more defeats than victories, but because he never gave up he won the highest office of the land.

LEADER: What did he learn?

Never give up!

READER: "Hailed Out" By C. L. Paddock Signs of The Times

Source ~ http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2a/hailed_out.htm

A farmer with a large acreage of beautiful grain was "hailed out" before harvest time. His crop was a total loss. After the hailstorm was over, father and son walked out into the devastated fields. The boy could not keep the tears back, and he expected some violent reaction from his dad. Imagine his surprise when he heard his father begin to sing, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee."

That son went out into the world, where he met trials and disappointments himself. Years later, looking back to the time of the hailstorm and his father's reaction, he said, "That was the most powerful sermon I've ever heard."

LEADER: What did he learn?

Look to the Lord for peace in times of adversity.

READER: "When Life Gives You a Kick" By Steve Goodier

Source ~ http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2d/when_life_gives_you_a_kick.htm

I'm told the story is true...A woman was giving birth to a baby in an elevator at a hospital. When she complained about the location, a nurse said, "Why, this isn't so bad; last year a woman delivered her baby out on the front lawn."

"Yes," said the woman on the floor, "that was me, too."

In the 1920s, Ernest Hemingway learned something about getting kicked by life. He was struggling to make his mark as an author when disaster struck. He lost a suitcase containing all his manuscripts -- many stories he'd polished to jewel-like perfection -- which he'd been planning to publish in a book.

According to Denis Waitley in his book EMPIRES OF THE MIND (William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1995), the devastated Hemingway couldn't conceive of redoing his work. All those months of arduous writing were simply wasted.

He lamented his predicament to friend and poet Ezra Pound who called it a stroke of good fortune! Pound assured Hemingway that when he rewrote the stories, he would forget the weak parts; only the best material would reappear. He encouraged the aspiring author to start over with a sense of optimism and confidence. Hemingway did rewrite the stories and eventually became one of the major figures in American literature.

Don't pray for fewer problems, pray for more skills. Don't ask for smaller challenges, ask for greater wisdom. Don't look for an easy way out, look for the best possible outcome. When life gives you a kick, let it kick you forward.

LEADER: What can we learn from this?

Pray for wisdom...AND...grow forward from your experience.

READER: QUOTE #1

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

"The reward of suffering is experience." - Aeschylus BC 525-456, Greek Dramatist

READER: QUOTE #2

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

"I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning to sail my ship." - Louisa May Alcott 1832-1888, American Author

READER: QUOTE #3

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

"Painful as it may be, a significant emotional event can be the catalyst for choosing a direction that serves us--and those around us -- more effectively. Look for the learning." - Eric Allenbaugh American Author of "Wake-Up Calls"

READER: QUOTE #4

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

"In every adversity there lies the seed of an equivalent advantage. In every defeat is a lesson showing you how to win the victory next time. - Robert Collier, American Writer, Publisher

READER: QUOTE #5

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=advers,difficult,trial>

"It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult." - Lucius Annaeus Seneca 4 BC-AD 65 Roman Philosopher/Writer

READER: QUOTE #6

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=advers,difficult,trial>

"I will persist until I succeed. Always will I take another step. If that is of no avail I will take another, and yet another. In truth, one step at a time is not too difficult.... I know that small attempts, repeated, will complete any undertaking." - Og Mandino, Author "The Greatest Salesman in the World"

READER: QUOTE #7

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“When you come to a roadblock, take a detour.” - Mary Kay Ash, Founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics

READER: QUOTE #8

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“Every silver lining has a cloud.” - Avon

READER: QUOTE #9

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“When walking through the “valley of shadows,” remember, a shadow is cast by a Light.” - H.K. Barclay

READER: QUOTE #10

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“We are always on the anvil; by trials God is shaping us for higher things.” - Henry Ward Beecher 1813-1887, American Preacher, Writer

READER: QUOTE #11

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“The proof of gold is fire...” - Benjamin Franklin 1706-1790, Scientist, Publisher, Diplomat

READER: QUOTE #12

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“The finest steel has to go through the hottest fire.” - Richard M. Nixon 1913-1994, 37th President of the USA

READER: QUOTE #13

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome.” - Anne Bradstreet 1612-1672, British Puritan Poet

READER: QUOTE #14

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“I would never have amounted to anything were it not for adversity. I was forced to come up the hard way.” - J.C. Penney (1875-1971, Retailer, Philanthropist)

READER: QUOTE #15

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“I had to pick myself up and get on with it, do it all over again, only even better this time.” - Sam Walton 1918-1992, Founder of Wal-Mart Stores

READER: QUOTE #16

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“Trials, temptations, disappointments -- all these are helps instead of hindrances, if one uses them rightly. They not only test the fiber of character but strengthen it. Every conquering temptation represents a new fund of moral energy. Every trial endured and weathered in the right spirit makes a soul nobler and stronger than it was before.” - James Buckman 1818-1884 chemist, college professor, museum curator, geologist, archaeologist, author, farmer

READER: QUOTE #17

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“When things are bad, we take comfort in the thought that they could always get worse. And when they are, we find hope in the thought that things are so bad they have to get better.” - Malcolm S. Forbes 1919-1990, American Publisher, Businessman

READER: QUOTE #18

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” - Martin Luther King Jr. 1929-1968, Nobel Prize Winner, 1964

READER: QUOTE #19

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=advers,difficult,trial>

“Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.” - John Quincy Adams 1767-148 6th US President

READER: QUOTE #20

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“Never bear more than one kind of trouble at a time. Some people bear three kinds; all they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have.” - Edward Everett Hale 1822-1909, Clergyman, Writer

READER: QUOTE #21

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“There is no better than adversity. Every defeat, every heartbreak, every loss, contains its own seed, its own lesson on how to improve your performance the next time.” - Og Mandino 1923-1996, American Motivational Author, Speaker

READER: QUOTE #22

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=advers,difficult,trial>

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” - Sir Winston Churchill 1874-1965 British Prime Minister

READER: QUOTE #23

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=advers,difficult,trial>

“In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” - Albert Einstein 1875-1955 Theory of Relativity Physicist

READER: QUOTE #24

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=advers,difficult,trial>

“I believe, with abiding conviction, that this people-nurtured by their deep faith, tutored by their hard lessons, moved by their high aspirations-have the will to meet the trials that these times impose.” - Lyndon Baines Johnson 1908-1973 36th US President

READER: QUOTE #25

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“I have often been downcast, but never in despair; I regard our hiding as a dangerous adventure, romantic and interesting at the same time. In my diary I treat all the privations as amusing. I have made up my mind now to lead a different life from other girls and, later on, different from ordinary housewives. My start has been so very full of interest, and that is the sole reason why I have to laugh at the humorous side of the most dangerous moments.” - Anne Frank 1929-1945, German Jewish Refugee, Diarist

READER: QUOTE #26

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“Gray skies are just clouds passing over.” - Duke Ellington, American jazz musician

READER: QUOTE #27

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“And when it rains on your parade, look up rather than down. Without the rain, there would be no rainbow.” - Jerry Chin

READER: QUOTE #28

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“Birds sing after a storm; why shouldn’t people feel as free to delight in whatever remains to them?” - Rose F. Kennedy 1890-1995, Mother of President JFK

READER: QUOTE #29

Source ~ <http://www.quoteworld.org/browse.php?thetext=advers,difficult,trial>

“Stop thinking about your difficulties, whatever they are, and start thinking about God instead.” - Emmet Fox 1886-1951 Spiritual Author

READER: James 1:1-11 (EVERYONE TURN TO)

James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings. Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

READER: “Turning Trials Into Triumphs” From Our Daily Bread

Source ~ <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/odb/odb-03-26-01.shtml>

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials. James 1:2.

James’ words “*Count it all joy when you fall into various trials*” offer a vital key for turning trials into triumphs. Although we don’t choose to have trials, we can choose how we respond. J. B. Phillips paraphrased it like this: “Don’t resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends!”

British counselor Selwyn Hughes reminds people that trials are our friends only if our goal is to become more like Jesus. If our goal is to avoid difficulties or mishaps, our trials will seem more like intruders.

Hughes admits that he often needs to take his own advice. He recalls a time when he and his wife had pulled off to the side of the road to look at a map. Then a truck swerved and slammed into their car. They escaped injury, but their car was totaled. Then it started to rain! Hughes immediately battled with frustration, apprehension, and anger toward the other driver, and found it extremely difficult to “count it all joy.” But as they waited for the police, he began to focus on how God could use the trial to make him more like Jesus. Gradually, the crisis became his friend.

The next time you face a trial of some kind, make friends with it and allow God to use the situation to make you more like Jesus. —JEY

Our loving God transforms us
And makes us like His Son
By using trials and testings
Until His work is done. —Sper

God chooses what we go through; we choose how we go through it.

READER: “On Purpose” From: Our Daily Bread

Source ~ <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/odb/odb-05-06-94.shtml>

All things work together for good . . . to those who are the called according to His purpose. --Romans 8:28

When a cowboy applied for an insurance policy, the agent asked, “Have you ever had any accidents?” After a moment’s reflection, the applicant responded, “Nope, but a bronc did kick in two of my ribs last summer, and a couple of years ago a rattlesnake bit me on the ankle.”

“Wouldn’t you call those accidents?” replied the puzzled agent. “Naw,” the cowboy said, “they did it on purpose!”

That story reminds me of the biblical truth that there are no accidents in the lives of God’s children. In today’s Scripture, we read how Joseph interpreted a difficult experience that had seemed like a great calamity. He had been thrown into a pit and then sold as a slave. This was a great test of his faith, and from the human standpoint it appeared to be a tragic case of injustice, not a providential means of blessing. But Joseph later learned that “*God meant it for good*” (Genesis 50:20).

Are you passing through the deep waters of trial and disappointment? Does everything seem to be going against you? These apparent misfortunes are not accidents. The Lord allows such things for a blessed purpose. So, patiently trust Him. If you know the Lord, someday you will praise Him for it all! --RWD

What looks like just an accident
When viewed through human eyes,
Is really God at work in us--
His blessing in disguise. --Sper

God transforms trials into triumphs.

READER: 1 John 5:1-5

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

READER: “Victim Or Victor” From Our Daily Bread
Source ~ <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/odb/odb-02-15-99.shtml>

Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. --John 16:33

The scar on my knee reminds me of a nasty fall from my first bicycle. While Mother bandaged my wound and Dad straightened my bike’s twisted handlebars, they reassured me that I could be a victor over this mishap rather than a victim. They were right! I’m much older now, but during adversity I still need to remember that I can be an overcomer.

Jesus gave us grounds for good cheer and confidence by declaring, “*I have overcome the world*” (John. 16:33). He accomplished this by His death and resurrection, and secured the victory for all generations. Preacher and author Watchman Nee (1903-1972) wrote, “Oh, that we might learn the undefeatedness of God!”

According to Jesus, it’s possible to experience His “undefeatedness” in every adversity. Paul testified, “*In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*” (Romans 8:37). And the apostle John wrote, “*Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith*” (1 John. 5:4).

How are you facing life’s trials these days? As a defeated victim? Or as an overcoming victor? Hear Jesus lovingly say, “*Be of good cheer!*” (John 16:33). He has overcome all these things, and so can you--through Him! - JEY

We need never be defeated
By the trials that come our way;
Since the Lord has overcome them,
Victory is ours today. --Sper

We can go through anything because Jesus goes with us

READER: “Troubles And Turns” From: Our Daily Bread
Source ~ <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/odb/odb-09-13-99.shtml>

May the God of all grace . . . perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. 1 Peter 5:10

I once heard Warren Wiersbe say that where you turn when you're in trouble reveals your character.

Think about it. What does it tell us about young kids whose trouble turns them toward gangs or guns or drugs? What do we learn about adults whose difficulties direct them toward alcohol or illicit relationships or the bizarre teachings of a cult?

What does it tell us about ourselves? Where do we turn when we have trouble with a relationship? Do we turn to the Bible for wisdom? Do we pray for direction? And where do we look for help when we are struggling with sin? To the Lord Jesus, the Master of forgiveness? To Scripture for foolproof help? Or to the dark recesses of life for a self-preservation that always leads to destruction?

In 1 Peter 5:10, we see where we can turn when trouble visits us. Wiersbe summarized the verse by saying that we need to look up to the God of all grace, look back and remember that He called us, look ahead and recognize the coming glory, and look within to see how God is equipping us through our difficulties.

Trouble on the horizon? Turn to 1 Peter 5:10 and let it guide you as you turn to God for help. --JDB

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged--
Take it to the Lord in prayer. --Scriven

Life's challenges are designed not to break us but to bend us toward God.

READER: "The Teaching of Adversity" From: My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers
Source ~ <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/utmost/08/02/>

The typical view of the Christian life is that it means being delivered from all adversity. But it actually means being delivered in adversity, which is something very different. *"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling . . ."* Psalm 91:1,10 . . .the place where you are at one with God.

If you are a child of God, you will certainly encounter adversities, but Jesus says you should not be surprised when they come. *"In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* He is saying, *"There is nothing for you to fear."* The same people who refused to talk about their adversities before they were saved often complain and worry after being born again because they have the wrong idea of what it means to live the life of a saint.

God does not give us overcoming life—He gives us life as we overcome. The strain of life is what builds our strength. If there is no strain, there will be no strength. Are you asking God to give you life, liberty, and joy? He cannot, unless you are willing to accept the strain. And once you face the strain, you will immediately get the strength. Overcome your own timidity and take the first step. Then God will give you nourishment— *"To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life . . ."* Revelation 2:7 . If you completely give of yourself physically, you become exhausted. But when you give of yourself spiritually, you get more strength. God never gives us strength for tomorrow, or for the next hour, but only for the strain of the moment. Our temptation is to face adversities from the standpoint of our own common sense. But a saint can *"be of good cheer"* even when seemingly defeated by adversities, because victory is absurdly impossible to everyone, except God.

READER: I Peter 1:1-9 (EVERYONE TURN TO)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

READER: “Crucible Steel” (Excerpt) From: Our Daily Bread
Source ~ <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/odb/odb-05-18-99.shtml>

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. - Ephesians 2:10

Christians, as the handiwork of God, are shaped and formed by His will. Sometimes He places us in a crucible of affliction. Peter wrote about the faith of Christians and said that it may be *“tested by fire”* (1 Peter 1:7). That testing may come in the form of *“various trials”* to refine our faith (v.6).

If you’re in a crucible of testing right now, don’t be discouraged. God knows what He is doing. He has promised to stay with you and help you to become a useful tool in His strong, loving hands. --DCE

All things work out for good we know--
Such is God’s great design;
He orders all our steps below
For purposes divine. --Peterson
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Gold is tested by fire; man is tested by adversity.

READER: Matthew 6:34

“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

READER: “Above The Circumstances” From: Our Daily Bread
Source ~ <http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/odb/odb-04-11-96.shtml>

Though the fig tree may not blossom, . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord. . - Habakkuk 3:17-18

I remember a story about a woman who was very discouraged because of the many problems in her life. As she was walking down the street, she met a fellow believer who asked, “How are you doing today?”

With a sour look and a bitter shrug she replied, “Oh, not too bad--under the circumstances.”

The other person quickly countered, “Well, get above the circumstances! That’s where Jesus is.”

The prophet Habakkuk was of the same mind. He refused to let circumstances dampen his faith or crush his hope. He looked to the future not with pessimistic fears of what else could go wrong, but with faith in God no matter what would happen. Even if he lost all his possessions, Habakkuk proclaimed that he would continue to trust the Lord to meet his needs (vv.17-19).

Our eyes are to be focused on the Lord, not on our circumstances. We are to live above the shadows of fear and bask in the sunlight of faith. Even though we, like Habakkuk, may have a long list of troubles, faith’s answer to disappointment must always be: *“Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation”* (v.18). That type of attitude will enable us to live above the circumstances instead of under them. --Henry G. Bosch

As you go along life’s weary road, let Jesus lift your heavy load.

LEADER: “Let Me Say I Am Here” Robert J. Morgan, The Red Sea Rules.
Source ~ http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon5/let_me_say_i_am_here.htm

This idea is summed up in an incident in the life of South African pastor Andrew Murray, who once faced a terrible crisis. Gathering himself into his study, he sat a long while quietly, prayerfully, thoughtfully. Presently his mind flew to his Lord Jesus. Picking up his pen, he wrote this in his journal:

First, He brought me here, it is by His will that I am in this strait place: in that fact I will rest.

Next, He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace to behave as His child.

Then, He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow.

Last, in His good time He can bring me out again-how and when He knows.

- Let me say I am here,
(1) By God's appointment
(2) In His keeping,
(3) Under His training
(4) For His time.

READER: Philippians 4:6-8

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

READER: "If"

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon1/if.htm>

If you never felt pain,
Then how would you know that I'm a Healer?

If you never went through difficulties,
How would you know that I'm a Deliverer?

If you never had a trial,
How could you call yourself an overcomer?

If you never felt sadness,
How would you know that I'm a Comforter?

If you never made a mistake,
How would you know that I'm forgiving?

If you knew all,
How would you know that I will answer your questions?

If you never were in trouble,
How would you know that I will come to your rescue?

If you never were broken,
Then how would know that I can make you whole?

If you never had a problem,
How would you know that I can solve them?

If you never had any suffering,
Then how would you know what Jesus went through?

If you never went through the fire,
then how would you become pure?

If I gave you all things,
How would you appreciate them?

If I never corrected you,
How would you know that I love you?

If you had all power,
Then how would you learn to depend on me?

If your life was perfect,
Then what would you need Me for?

READER: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

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

LEADER: QUOTE #30

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“The worst thing that happens to you ...may be the best thing for you ...if you don’t let it get the best of you.”
- Will Rogers 1879-1935, American Humorist, Actor

LEADER: QUOTE # 31

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Adversity>

“If your knees are knocking, kneel on them.” - Source Unknown

COMMENTS IF TIME:

**SCHEDULE TEN MINUTES BEFORE CLOSING FOR
PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES:**

COPY AND DISTRIBUTE THE FOLLOWING PAGES FOR YOUR READERS:

READERS

“Get Some Altitude”

Shelly, one of our readers, recently sent me a fascinating story. She tells about a tornado that ripped through the central part of her home state of Oklahoma last spring. Guy, a church pastor, and his wife, Vickie, lived directly in the path of the on-coming storm. They took refuge in a closet in the parsonage.

Guy belongs to a denomination (United Methodist) which is known for moving its pastors frequently, and he was scheduled for a move to a new parish in June. Furthermore, as a church leader, he no doubt encountered any number of storms and conflicts among church members. But a tornado was something else entirely, and hiding in the closet seemed the best course of action for the couple.

After the storm passed, they emerged from their hiding place and were astonished to discover that their closet was the only part of the house left standing! Though they lost everything, they had come through unscathed. As the couple stood in the middle of the debris that used to be their home, Vickie's first comment was: "Wow, Guy! This is wonderful! This will be the easiest move we've ever made!"

Here is a person who knows something about handling difficulties. Sometimes we have to look beyond a problem before we can move forward.

If you have ever flown in a jet on a foggy or cloudy day, you probably know something about looking beyond problems. All seems dark and dreary on the ground. Yet every day is a sunny day if we can only get enough altitude.

Thomas Carlyle put it like this: "What you can see, yet cannot see over, is as good as infinite." Get some altitude and you will be able to see beyond the problem!

————— • —————

“Abe”

If you think you have failed, remind yourself of the life story of this man:

Age 22 - failed in business
Age 23 - ran for legislature and was defeated
Age 24 - failed again in Buenos
Age 26 - sweetheart died
Age 27 - had a nervous breakdown
Age 29 - defeated for speaker
Age 31 - defeated for elector
Age 34 - defeated for Congress
Age 37 - elected to Congress
Age 39 - defeated for Congress
Age 46 - defeated for Senate
Age 47 - defeated for vice president
Age 49 - defeated for Senate
Age 51 - elected president of the United States

This is the record of Abraham Lincoln. Throughout his life he suffered many more defeats than victories, but because he never gave up he won the highest office of the land.

————— • —————

“Hailed Out”

A farmer with a large acreage of beautiful grain was “hailed out” before harvest time. His crop was a total loss. After the hailstorm was over, father and son walked out into the devastated fields. The boy could not keep the tears back, and he expected some violent reaction from his dad. Imagine his surprise when he heard his father begin to sing, “Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.”

That son went out into the world, where he met trials and disappointments himself. Years later, looking back to the time of the hailstorm and his father's reaction, he said, “That was the most powerful sermon I've ever heard.”

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“When Life Gives You a Kick”

I’m told the story is true...A woman was giving birth to a baby in an elevator at a hospital. When she complained about the location, a nurse said, “Why, this isn’t so bad; last year a woman delivered her baby out on the front lawn.”

“Yes,” said the woman on the floor, “that was me, too.”

In the 1920s, Ernest Hemingway learned something about getting kicked by life. He was struggling to make his mark as an author when disaster struck. He lost a suitcase containing all his manuscripts -- many stories he’d polished to jewel-like perfection -- which he’d been planning to publish in a book.

According to Denis Waitley in his book *EMPIRES OF THE MIND* (William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1995), the devastated Hemingway couldn’t conceive of redoing his work. All those months of arduous writing were simply wasted.

He lamented his predicament to friend and poet Ezra Pound who called it a stroke of good fortune! Pound assured Hemingway that when he rewrote the stories, he would forget the weak parts; only the best material would reappear. He encouraged the aspiring author to start over with a sense of optimism and confidence. Hemingway did rewrite the stories and eventually became one of the major figures in American literature.

Don’t pray for fewer problems, pray for more skills. Don’t ask for smaller challenges, ask for greater wisdom. Don’t look for an easy way out, look for the best possible outcome. When life gives you a kick, let it kick you forward.

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QUOTE #1

“The reward of suffering is experience.” - Aeschylus BC 525-456, Greek Dramatist

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QUOTE #2

“I’m not afraid of storms, for I’m learning to sail my ship.” - Louisa May Alcott 1832-1888, American Author

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QUOTE #3

“Painful as it may be, a significant emotional event can be the catalyst for choosing a direction that serves us--and those around us -- more effectively. Look for the learning.” - Eric Allenbaugh American Author of “Wake-Up Calls”

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QUOTE #4

“In every adversity there lies the seed of an equivalent advantage. In every defeat is a lesson showing you how to win the victory next time. - Robert Collier, American Writer, Publisher

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QUOTE #5

“It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.” - Lucius Annaeus Seneca 4 BC-AD 65 Roman Philosopher/Writer

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QUOTE #6

“I will persist until I succeed. Always will I take another step. If that is of no avail I will take another, and yet another. In truth, one step at a time is not too difficult.... I know that small attempts, repeated, will complete any undertaking.” - Og Mandino, Author “The Greatest Salesman in the World”

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QUOTE #7

“When you come to a roadblock, take a detour.” - Mary Kay Ash, Founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics

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QUOTE #8

“Every silver lining has a cloud.” - Avon

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QUOTE #9

“When walking through the “valley of shadows,” remember, a shadow is cast by a Light.” - H.K. Barclay

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QUOTE #10

“We are always on the anvil; by trials God is shaping us for higher things.” - Henry Ward Beecher 1813-1887, American Preacher, Writer

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QUOTE #11

“The proof of gold is fire...” - Benjamin Franklin 1706-1790, Scientist, Publisher, Diplomat

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QUOTE #12

“The finest steel has to go through the hottest fire.” - Richard M. Nixon 1913-1994, 37th President of the USA

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QUOTE #13

“If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome.” - Anne Bradstreet 1612-1672, British Puritan Poet

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QUOTE #14

“I would never have amounted to anything were it not for adversity. I was forced to come up the hard way.” - J.C. Penney (1875-1971, Retailer, Philanthropist

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QUOTE #15

“I had to pick myself up and get on with it, do it all over again, only even better this time.” - Sam Walton 1918-1992, Founder of Wal-Mart Stores

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QUOTE #16

“Trials, temptations, disappointments -- all these are helps instead of hindrances, if one uses them rightly. They not only test the fiber of character but strengthen it. Every conquering temptation represents a new fund of moral energy. Every trial endured and weathered in the right spirit makes a soul nobler and stronger than it was before.” - James Buckman 1818-1884 chemist, college professor, museum curator, geologist, archaeologist, author, farmer

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QUOTE #17

“When things are bad, we take comfort in the thought that they could always get worse. And when they are, we find hope in the thought that things are so bad they have to get better.” - Malcolm S. Forbes 1919-1990, American Publisher, Businessman

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QUOTE #18

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” - Martin Luther King Jr. 1929-1968, Nobel Prize Winner, 1964

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QUOTE #19

“Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.” - John Quincy Adams 1767-148 6th US President

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QUOTE #20

“Never bear more than one kind of trouble at a time. Some people bear three kinds; all they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have.” - Edward Everett Hale 1822-1909, Clergyman, Writer

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QUOTE #21

“There is no better than adversity. Every defeat, every heartbreak, every loss, contains its own seed, its own lesson on how to improve your performance the next time.” - Og Mandino 1923-1996, American Motivational Author, Speaker

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QUOTE #22

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” - Sir Winston Churchill 1874-1965 British Prime Minister

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QUOTE #23

“In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” - Albert Einstein 1875-1955 Theory of Relativity Physicist

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QUOTE #24

“I believe, with abiding conviction, that this people-nurtured by their deep faith, tutored by their hard lessons, moved by their high aspirations-have the will to meet the trials that these times impose.” - Lyndon Baines Johnson 1908-1973 36th US President

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QUOTE #25

“I have often been downcast, but never in despair; I regard our hiding as a dangerous adventure, romantic and interesting at the same time. In my diary I treat all the privations as amusing. I have made up my mind now to lead a different life from other girls and, later on, different from ordinary housewives. My start has been so very full of interest, and that is the sole reason why I have to laugh at the humorous side of the most dangerous moments.” - Anne Frank 1929-1945, German Jewish Refugee, Diarist

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QUOTE #26

“Gray skies are just clouds passing over.” - Duke Ellington, American jazz musician

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QUOTE #27

“And when it rains on your parade, look up rather than down. Without the rain, there would be no rainbow.” - Jerry Chin

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QUOTE #28

“Birds sing after a storm; why shouldn’t people feel as free to delight in whatever remains to them?” - Rose F. Kennedy 1890-1995, Mother of President JFK

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QUOTE #29

“Stop thinking about your difficulties, whatever they are, and start thinking about God instead.” - Emmet Fox 1886-1951 Spiritual Author

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James 1:1-11

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“Turning Trials Into Triumphs”

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials. James 1:2.

James’ words “*Count it all joy when you fall into various trials*” offer a vital key for turning trials into triumphs. Although we don’t choose to have trials, we can choose how we respond. J. B. Phillips paraphrased it like this: “Don’t resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends!”

British counselor Selwyn Hughes reminds people that trials are our friends only if our goal is to become more like Jesus. If our goal is to avoid difficulties or mishaps, our trials will seem more like intruders.

Hughes admits that he often needs to take his own advice. He recalls a time when he and his wife had pulled off to the side of the road to look at a map. Then a truck swerved and slammed into their car. They escaped injury, but their car was totaled. Then it started to rain! Hughes immediately battled with frustration, apprehension, and anger toward the other driver, and found it extremely difficult to “count it all joy.” But as they waited for the police, he began to focus on how God could use the trial to make him more like Jesus. Gradually, the crisis became his friend.

The next time you face a trial of some kind, make friends with it and allow God to use the situation to make you more like Jesus. —JEY

Our loving God transforms us
And makes us like His Son
By using trials and testings
Until His work is done. —Sper

God chooses what we go through; we choose how we go through it.

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“On Purpose”

All things work together for good . . . to those who are the called according to His purpose. --Romans 8:28

When a cowboy applied for an insurance policy, the agent asked, “Have you ever had any accidents?” After a moment’s reflection, the applicant responded, “Nope, but a bronc did kick in two of my ribs last summer, and a couple of years ago a rattlesnake bit me on the ankle.”

“Wouldn’t you call those accidents?” replied the puzzled agent. “Naw,” the cowboy said, “they did it on purpose!”

That story reminds me of the biblical truth that there are no accidents in the lives of God’s children. In today’s Scripture, we read how Joseph interpreted a difficult experience that had seemed like a great calamity. He had been thrown into a pit and then sold as a slave. This was a great test of his faith, and from the human standpoint it appeared to be a tragic case of injustice, not a providential means of blessing. But Joseph later learned that *“God meant it for good”* (Genesis 50:20).

Are you passing through the deep waters of trial and disappointment? Does everything seem to be going against you? These apparent misfortunes are not accidents. The Lord allows such things for a blessed purpose. So, patiently trust Him. If you know the Lord, someday you will praise Him for it all! --RWD

What looks like just an accident
When viewed through human eyes,
Is really God at work in us--
His blessing in disguise. --Sper

God transforms trials into triumphs.

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1 John 5:1-5

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“Victim Or Victor”

Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. --John 16:33

The scar on my knee reminds me of a nasty fall from my first bicycle. While Mother bandaged my wound and Dad straightened my bike’s twisted handlebars, they reassured me that I could be a victor over this mishap rather than a victim. They were right! I’m much older now, but during adversity I still need to remember that I can be an overcomer.

Jesus gave us grounds for good cheer and confidence by declaring, *“I have overcome the world”* (John. 16:33). He accomplished this by His death and resurrection, and secured the victory for all generations. Preacher and author Watchman Nee (1903-1972) wrote, “Oh, that we might learn the undefeatedness of God!”

According to Jesus, it’s possible to experience His “undefeatedness” in every adversity. Paul testified, *“In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us”* (Romans 8:37). And the apostle John wrote, *“Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith”* (1 John. 5:4).

How are you facing life’s trials these days? As a defeated victim? Or as an overcoming victor? Hear Jesus lovingly say, *“Be of good cheer!”* (John 16:33). He has overcome all these things, and so can you--through Him! - JEY

We need never be defeated
By the trials that come our way;
Since the Lord has overcome them,
Victory is ours today. --Sper

We can go through anything because Jesus goes with us

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“Troubles And Turns”

May the God of all grace . . . perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. 1 Peter 5:10

I once heard Warren Wiersbe say that where you turn when you're in trouble reveals your character.

Think about it. What does it tell us about young kids whose trouble turns them toward gangs or guns or drugs? What do we learn about adults whose difficulties direct them toward alcohol or illicit relationships or the bizarre teachings of a cult?

What does it tell us about ourselves? Where do we turn when we have trouble with a relationship? Do we turn to the Bible for wisdom? Do we pray for direction? And where do we look for help when we are struggling with sin? To the Lord Jesus, the Master of forgiveness? To Scripture for foolproof help? Or to the dark recesses of life for a self-preservation that always leads to destruction?

In 1 Peter 5:10, we see where we can turn when trouble visits us. Wiersbe summarized the verse by saying that we need to look up to the God of all grace, look back and remember that He called us, look ahead and recognize the coming glory, and look within to see how God is equipping us through our difficulties.

Trouble on the horizon? Turn to 1 Peter 5:10 and let it guide you as you turn to God for help. --JDB

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged--
Take it to the Lord in prayer. --Scriven

Life's challenges are designed not to break us but to bend us toward God.

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“The Teaching of Adversity”

The typical view of the Christian life is that it means being delivered from all adversity. But it actually means being delivered in adversity, which is something very different. *“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling . . .”* Psalm 91:1,10 . . .the place where you are at one with God.

If you are a child of God, you will certainly encounter adversities, but Jesus says you should not be surprised when they come. *“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* He is saying, *“There is nothing for you to fear.”* The same people who refused to talk about their adversities before they were saved often complain and worry after being born again because they have the wrong idea of what it means to live the life of a saint.

God does not give us overcoming life—He gives us life as we overcome. The strain of life is what builds our strength. If there is no strain, there will be no strength. Are you asking God to give you life, liberty, and joy? He cannot, unless you are willing to accept the strain. And once you face the strain, you will immediately get the strength. Overcome your own timidity and take the first step. Then God will give you nourishment— *“To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life . . .”* Revelation 2:7 . If you completely give of yourself physically, you become exhausted. But when you give of yourself spiritually, you get more strength. God never gives us strength for tomorrow, or for the next hour, but only for the strain of the moment. Our temptation is to face adversities from the standpoint of our own common sense. But a saint can *“be of good cheer”* even when seemingly defeated by adversities, because victory is absurdly impossible to everyone, except God.

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I Peter 1:1-9

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“Crucible Steel”

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. - Ephesians 2:10

Christians, as the handiwork of God, are shaped and formed by His will. Sometimes He places us in a crucible of affliction. Peter wrote about the faith of Christians and said that it may be “*tested by fire*” (1 Peter 1:7). That testing may come in the form of “*various trials*” to refine our faith (v.6).

If you’re in a crucible of testing right now, don’t be discouraged. God knows what He is doing. He has promised to stay with you and help you to become a useful tool in His strong, loving hands. --DCE

All things work out for good we know--
Such is God’s great design;
He orders all our steps below
For purposes divine. --Peterson
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Gold is tested by fire; man is tested by adversity.

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Matthew 6:34

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“Above The Circumstances”

Though the fig tree may not blossom, . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord. . - Habakkuk 3:17-18

I remember a story about a woman who was very discouraged because of the many problems in her life. As she was walking down the street, she met a fellow believer who asked, “How are you doing today?”

With a sour look and a bitter shrug she replied, “Oh, not too bad--under the circumstances.”

The other person quickly countered, “Well, get above the circumstances! That’s where Jesus is.”

The prophet Habakkuk was of the same mind. He refused to let circumstances dampen his faith or crush his hope. He looked to the future not with pessimistic fears of what else could go wrong, but with faith in God no matter what would happen. Even if he lost all his possessions, Habakkuk proclaimed that he would continue to trust the Lord to meet his needs (vv.17-19).

Our eyes are to be focused on the Lord, not on our circumstances. We are to live above the shadows of fear and bask in the sunlight of faith. Even though we, like Habakkuk, may have a long list of troubles, faith’s answer to disappointment must always be: “*Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation*” (v.18). That type of attitude will enable us to live above the circumstances instead of under them. --Henry G. Bosch

As you go along life’s weary road, let Jesus lift your heavy load.

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Philippians 4:6-8

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“If”

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon1/if.htm>

If you never felt pain,
Then how would you know that I'm a Healer?

If you never went through difficulties,
How would you know that I'm a Deliverer?

If you never had a trial,
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If you never made a mistake,
How would you know that I'm forgiving?

If you knew all,
How would you know that I will answer your questions?

If you never were in trouble,
How would you know that I will come to your rescue?

If you never were broken,
Then how would know that I can make you whole?

If you never had a problem,
How would you know that I can solve them?

If you never had any suffering,
Then how would you know what Jesus went through?

If you never went through the fire,
then how would you become pure?

If I gave you all things,
How would you appreciate them?

If I never corrected you,
How would you know that I love you?

If you had all power,
Then how would you learn to depend on me?

If your life was perfect,
Then what would you need Me for?

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2 Corinthians 1:3-4

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