

Faith must be tough

Mark 8: 31-36

³¹And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. ³³But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. ³⁴And when he had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. ³⁵For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. ³⁶For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

"A cross was used for a crucifixion!"

"I believe that God is calling us to a toughness!"

Adversity Principle.

Biological term.

- Comes from the understanding that easy living and prosperity produce a certain softness.
- Animals in the Zoo.
- Lie there and yawn and eat.
- Flabby
- Not toned up
- Not ready for action.
- Because all their needs are met.
- There is something to having to work for it.
- There is something about the stress and strain of living in the wild .
- Where if they aren't successful in finding food they go hungry.

"There is something about adversity that makes a better organism."

I Pet 1:7 ⁷That 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:

"When you go through hard times you get tougher!"

- "I believe this fact explains the difficulties and stress that the Lord comes into our life."

Our local galaxy

- 100 billion stars in it.
- 100,000 light years across
- in other words, light traveling at 186,000 miles per second
- it's going to take 100,000 years to cross it.

But those are just our neighbors you're seeing up there.

- There are another 100 billion galaxies up there, each with an estimated 100 billion stars in it.
- And the scope of the visible universe that is only what we can see is 26 billion light years across.
- Light traveling at 186,000 miles per second would take 26 billion years to cross it.
- And that's just the visible universe!

- And there are stars larger than the orbit of Pluto around our sun.
- I'm thinking of Epsilon in particular.
- Which is it was hallow you could put 2 billion 300 million of our suns inside of it.

Psalms 91:1

1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork."

And what excites me about all of that is that it strengthens my faith.

Because the God that created all that and keeps it in perfect order is a friend of mine!"

And he can handle all the little problems I give Him.

But isn't it something

- that the one who created it all
- would allow some of the difficulties that He allows to come into my life and your life.

That the one who could span the galaxies

- and set them in perfect order
- And cause there to be a harmonious order in the midst of it.
- Would allow at times literal chaos to come into our lives that would allow us to be pushed to the brink of literal destruction?!

Psychologists will tell you that our emotional stability
is wrapped up in what we expect from life.

“And I believe that much of America is in the same boat with regards to this.”

“If there is a message that America needs to hear, it has to do with what we expect out of life!”

- **I think we feel almost entitled by some kind of divine decree to 72 years of bliss with very few frustrations and very few inconveniences and very little stress and very little difficulty.**
- **And therefore the “gap” between “life as it is” and “life as it ought to be” sends us into torrents of emotion and frustration**

And you can see this all around you.

- I don't want to trivialize someone's problems today,
- But I am amazed at times with some people's complaints.
- They are at times absolutely minor when you put them up against other peoples situations.
- But in there eyes no one in the world is going through what they are going though.
- 3 cloudy days in a row is enough to bring on depression.
- Or frustration over the fact that the boss doesn't appreciate what I do.
- Or my car won't run

It doesn't matter what it is...

- You can have every thing right in you life, but one thing that “bugs” you and it's like the weakest link in the chain.
- That one thing can ruin your day.

“And I believe of all the countries in the world....this can most be said of Americans in present day history.”

- “We have enjoyed so my blessing, that we are destroyed emotionally when the blessing stops even for a second in our lives.”
- I believe I see a mental softness and an emotional softness in our lives.
- Contrast that if you will to the harsh and hostile environment that we see most of the rest of the world in today.
- I believe we would be amazed to find out just how “BAD” some people have it in other parts of the world.

- In the Philippines they live on the dumps and derive a living from digging through the trash and their meals come from the garbage.
- Compare it to the sufferings of South Africa where mothers give birth to their babies only to see them either starve to death days later or succumb to the aids virus that has spread to epidemic proportions.
- Contrast it to the little female babies in China that are left on a window sill to catch pneumonia.
- Consider if you will those persecuted by torture every day for their religious and political beliefs.
- By the way people today are still tortured to death because of their religious beliefs
- A Catholic priest just 2 weeks ago was tortured and beaten to death but not before they pulled his toe nails out and made him to walk through the jungle.
- Now I am not Catholic.
- You know where I stand with that doctrine.
- But I am amazed to think that something like this happens in the world in which we live.
- And to think that I would become upset when someone in the least way would question my faith in God.
- I believe our lives would be forever changed if we could see the children in this world who give themselves to prostitution to ensure their survival.
- I believe our eyes would be opened if we could see with our own eyes the famine, the disease, the hunger, the hopelessness, the despair, the war, the destitution that fills many peoples lives every single moment of every single day!!!
- We ignore the fact that much of the world is starving to death right now as I speak.
- We ignore the fact that other peoples children are dying right now.
- We are upset when our electric is cut off for a few hours when other peoples homes are obliterated by war.
- We are inconvenienced when we have to stand in line at McDonalds for 10 minutes when some people walk for days to find food.
- Only to watch their young and weak starve to death along the way.

“But isn’t it something that in the midst of these same regions of the world that I am referring to, there is today one of the greatest revivals going on that the world has ever seen.”

What I am saying today is that adversity breeds “toughness”!

And prosperity like we’ve had for 40 years in this country breeds softness.

- It’s a law of nature!

Animal world – those in captivity “change” they’re not able to adapt or survive in the wild.

Plant world – tree in rain forest – plenty of water – roots stay on the surface – doesn’t have to send them down to find water.....as a result it can be blown over by the first wind storm that comes along.

But you plant a maskeet tree in the desert where the roots have to go down 30 feet of more to find water.

- And that thing is so strong that nothing can blow it over.
- Because it grows in a hostile environment.

**Now folks if this is true of animals and plants it’s true of us
And it’s especially true of us spiritually.**

There’s no better example of what I am talking about than what was going on in Europe just before the Berlin wall came down 10 years ago.

- You aware that Europe was divided into the east and the west.
- The east was behind the “Iron Curtain”.
- And the Christians that were behind the Iron curtain were under “Incredible oppression”
- They couldn’t find Bibles.
- No materials
- No tapes.
- No Christian programming on TV or radio.
- Christian leaders were executed, tortured or imprisoned.
- Many times 1 pastor that has not been through formal Bible School training has 8-10 churches that he pastors.
- And those churches have to meet in private.
- **“GREAT OPPRESSION ON THESE PEOPLE IN EAST EUROPE....**

In Western Europe by contrast they were free.

- They can worship where they want to
- How they want to and when they want to.
- Bibles every where.
- Seminaries every where.
- Authorities on the bible are every where.

But isn’t it strange folks that there were and are more Christians in East Europe than in West Europe?!

- There were more Christians behind the Iron Curtain than there were in the freedom of the West.
- And they were tougher.

- And they believe it more.
- And they live it more.
- **Because there is this principle in life.**

I believe that God wants His people to be “Tough”!

- Look at the Children of Israel in the desert.
- No water
- No food

And they started to complain.

- And let's look at how God responded to their complaints.
- Numbers 11: *And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. ²And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched. ³And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.*

New testament

Jesus in boat with the disciples

-asleep...storm.....disciples scared.....Jesus rebukes them and says o ye of little faith.

Jesus on the night of His betrayal

-asks the disciples to watch....they were tired...they couldn't do it...Jesus comes back and rebukes them for not being tough.
- Look at the 2nd half of the 11 chapter of Hebrews when those people suffered every form of difficulty and their call “Heroes” because of the way they suffered.
- Sawn asunder
- Went without food
- Improper clothing

This theme runs throughout the bible -----God wants us tough

- **NOW WHY???**
- **Not a phony tough.**
- **Not a fake smile and plastic grin toughness.**
- **Not a I'm happy and Blessed when every thing is falling apart kind of toughness**

First let me say that the same boiling water that softens the carrot will harden the egg.

- Some people respond to adversity by getting tougher and some by going to pieces.

- The Lord understands that He knows that.

But here is what I believe the Lord wants from us!!!

SPIRITUAL STABILTY

This runs very close to emotional stability.

- Mind
- Body
- Spirit

One effects the other.

- If mind is sick....body is sick...
- If body is sick ...spirit is sick....
- Spiritual problems develop out of emotional and physical weakness.
- And if you do not have stability emotionally it will effect you spiritually.

This is why God wants strength from us.

Nothing impresses me more that to watch someone claw their way out of tragedy with their faith in tact.

- Not too many years ago a Baptist minister and his wife from Chicago were traveling down the interstate with their many children when a piece of debris fell off a truck and hit their family van and caused a fiery accident that took the lives of several of their youngest children. Yet when they were interviewed afterwards they gave praise to God and suggested that maybe it was all in a part of His plan for their lives.

Folks that's tough faith.

I think of a young man names Eric.

- Physically retarded.
- Mentally handicapped
- Arm crooked.
- Speech impaired.
- One considerably shorter than the other.
- Yet he sits on the front row of the church and stands through out most of the service and worships with all of his heart.
- That's tough faith.

I think of a young man by the name of Billy Schmit

- who though stricken with cerebral palsy still never missed one Sunday of church.

- And never one time missed working on the church bus that went around picking up children for Sunday school.
 - Even the morning of an unseasonal early rain...though he didn't have on the proper coat that would have kept him warm.
 - He did not stay behind that morning.
 - But he rode the bus and went to the children's doors and taught them songs about Jesus on their way to Sunday School.
 - Yet while he sang and walked to the doors what he could not know was that he was getting a cold that would later develop into pneumonia and just a few days later that would take his life.
- That's tough faith.

Tough faith

- Sister Telkmarian praying for the souls of the men who killed her baby.
- Sister Freeman praying for her bleeding husband when she herself has one of the most painful diseases that ravoks her own body.
- Brother Walker encouraging me when he himself is days away from dying from cancer.
- Shadrac Meshac and Abendego saying "Though we die in the flames...still we will not serve you o king".
- It's the midnight prayer. The one that wakes you up in the middle of the night.
- It's the fasting for 1 lost soul.
- It's the witness in the midst of adversity.

Paul said in Philipians 4: ¹Not that I speak in respect of want: **for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.** ¹²I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am **instructed** {Commanded} both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Do you realize where Paul was when He wrote that?...

- Roman Jail
- Rats
- Damp
- Bugs
- Criminals
- Chains
- Hands and feet in chains
- Can you imagine what kind of bathroom facilities
- He's an older man by now.

- And he writes....: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.