

## The Trial Of Your Faith

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Mark 8: 31-36

“<sup>31</sup>And 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. <sup>32</sup>And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But 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. <sup>34</sup>And 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. <sup>35</sup>For 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. <sup>36</sup>For 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.**

- Comes from the understanding that easy living and prosperity produce 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 <sup>7</sup>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:

“When you go through hard times you get tougher!”

- “I believe this fact explains the difficulties and stress that the Lord allows to come 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
- is going to take 100,000 years to cross our galaxy.

### **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 in the scope of the visible universe (which 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!

There are stars larger than the orbit of Pluto around our sun.

- I’m thinking of star Epsilon in particular.
- Which if it was hollow 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 I know and trust that he can handle all the little problems of my life.**

### **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 cause 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.

- **I think we feel almost entitled to a life 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 we want it 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 people's situations.
- But in their eyes no one in the world is going through what they are going through.
  
- 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 if one thing “bugs” you, it's like the weakest link in the chain.
- That one thing will steal the joy you should be have because of all the things that are going right in our life .

#### **“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 much blessing, that we are destroyed emotionally when the blessing stops even for a second in our lives.”
- There is in too many of us, a mental and emotional softness.
- Contrast that if you will to the harsh and hostile environment that we see much 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 thousands of people live on the dumps and derive a living from digging through the trash where 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.
- Consider if you will those persecuted by torture every day for their religious and political beliefs.
- And to think that I would become upset when someone in the least way would question my faith in God.

I believe we would understand this message more 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 people’s children are dying right now.
- We are upset when our electric is cut off for a few hours when other people’s 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 50 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 it becomes 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're 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 who 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.
- They've got Bibles every where.
- Seminaries every where.
- Authorities on the bible are all throughout Western Europe.

**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.**

- But lets 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. <sup>2</sup>And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched. <sup>3</sup>And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.*

New Testament

### **Jesus in a 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 enough to stay awake as He prayed.
- Look at the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 11th chapter of Hebrews when those people suffered every form of difficulty and they're called "Heroes" because of the way they suffered.
- Sawn asunder
- Went without food
- Improper clothing

This theme runs throughout the bible ----- because God wants our Faith to be Tough.

- **NOW WHY???**

### **Did you know 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 affect you spiritually.

This is why God wants strength from us.

**Nothing impresses me more than to watch someone claw their way out of tragedy with their faith intact.**

November 09, 1994 Chicago Newspaper

In a freak accident Tuesday on a Milwaukee expressway, a minivan carrying a Chicago family burst into flames, killing five children and critically injuring the parents and another child.

The accident occurred when the minivan, driven by Duane "Scott" Willis, a minister at a South Side church, ran over a piece of steel that had fallen off a truck.

The 18-inch steel bracket, which holds mud flaps on semitrailer trucks, punctured the van's gas tank and lodged in the tank. Sparks ignited leaking gas from the tank, and "within seconds" the 1994 Chrysler Voyager minivan burst into flames, according to Milwaukee County Sheriff's Sgt. David Lushewitz.

Trapped in the van and killed in the fire were Peter Willis, 6 weeks old; Elizabeth Willis, 3; Hank Willis, 7; Sam Willis, 9; Joe Willis, 11. Their 13-year-old son, Ben Willis, escaped the fire but died later that night due to burns over 90 percent of his body.

Duane Willis, 47, the minister at Parkwood Baptist Church, at 10435 S. Spaulding Ave., his wife, Janet Willis, 47, escaped the crash with burns to their hands and face.

Many of the several hundred who attended the Friday wake for the children were in awe of the parents' ability to make sense of the tragedy by drawing from their faith.

"They're doing very well," one person said. "I think better than we are."

At a Wednesday news conference in Milwaukee, Scott Willis, a born-again evangelical Christian, told how he and his wife believed that "God has purposes and God has reasons"-even for such events like the explosion that killed their children.

That strength was apparent at the children's wake at the Beverly Ridge Funeral Home on the Southwest Side, where the parents, who live at the Parkwood church, gave as many hugs as they received.

"I think if they broke down, other people would break down too," said Lisa Morgan, a relative of the Willis's, after passing by the five caskets that contained the bodies of Willis children.

"I don't know the family, but I came because their strength and their faith really impressed me," said one visitor, Rev. Robert Patten, of the Grace Missionary Baptist Church on the South Side.

### **Folks that's tough faith.**

Paul said in Philipians 4: <sup>1</sup>Not that I speak in respect of want: **for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.** <sup>12</sup>I 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. <sup>13</sup>I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.

### **Paul was when He wrote that...**

- Roman Jail
- Rats
- Damp
- Bugs
- Criminals
- Chains
- Hands and feet in chains
- He's an older man by now.
- And he writes.... **for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.**
- He said, "I have faith that no matter how bad the situation is, or where it takes me, I am content that God's love and mercy are with me."



Paul understood, Jesus was all he needed.