**THE BLESSING OF ADVERSITY**

It was Frederich Nietzsche, the German philosopher, who famously said in the 19th century, “What doesn’t kill you can make you stronger.” But there’s a better quote than that, given by a far higher source – God. In fact, I’m going to give you a series of quotes from our heavenly Father that I hope you will meditate on, even memorize. These are not philosophical quotations that give you the warm fuzzy’s to make you feel better and raise your self-esteem, but are eternal principles which are truth that can set you free.

*“It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.”* Lamentations 3:27

*“Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. Let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*.” James 1:2-4

*“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint.”* Romans 5:3-5

“*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ*.” I Peter 1:6-7

*“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”* 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Adversity might be defined as: “An overwhelming challenge – a seemingly insurmountable obstacle – a wall so thick that you have no idea how you are going to get through it, over it, under it, or around it.” When adversity first hits then everyone (and I mean everyone) is temporarily paralyzed. We’re stunned. We don’t know what to do. But slowly but surely reality sets in and we realize we have two options. Fear or Faith.

Fear whispers, “You can’t do anything about this.” Quit. Give up. What’s the use? Fear spirals you downward from doubt, to distress, to despair, to depression.

Faith shouts, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*!” Faith says, “*With God all things are possible*.” Faith says, “*When I am weak, then I am strong*.”

In life there are always rocks in the road ahead of you. You can either see them as stumbling blocks, or stepping-stones. It all depends on how you use them. Hear the advice from famous men we admire who have used adversity as stepping-stones:

“Hardships often prepare ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny.” - C. S. Lewis (read his book *The Problem of Pain*; watch his movie *Shadowlands* to know his pain)

“Adversity introduces a man to himself.” - Albert Einstein
(his biography proves prosperity covers up real character, adversity exposes it)

“All the adversity I’ve had in my life, all my troubles and obstacles, have strengthened me. You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you.” - Walt Disney
(we think of Disney and automatically smile and wish upon a star, but his life story was full of adversity which he incredibly overcame)

“An optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” - Winston Churchill
(without his leadership in WW2 both Britain and America would now speak German)

Think about it as you are going through your present adversity. In this church, and in most churches, there are saints going through all the following circumstances:
*Physical* crisis (cancer, stroke, heart disease, emphysema, arthritis, Parkinsons, asthma,
 tremors, migraines, paralysis, vertigo, pain in the neck, shoulder, back, knee, leg);
*Emotional* crisis (death of a loved one, family member suffering, mental disorder,
 fearful of job lost – or about to lose, stress from the job, or exposure to virus);
*Spiritual* crisis (child out of fellowship with God, guilt from personal sin(s), feelings of
 rejection from a brother or sister, tension between saints).

All of these adversities stand to be a blessing or a curse, depending on how you handle them. Whether physical (think Paul in a prison), emotional (think Elijah in a cave), or spiritual (think David before Nathan), God has told us endurance “*makes you perfect and complete, lacking nothing*” (Jam. 1:4). He tells us *“glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope”* (Rom. 5:3). In other words, blessing in adversity. Whatever trial you are facing, hold to God’s unchanging hand.

Until then…

God be with you till we meet again. By His counsel guide uphold you.
With His sheep securely fold you. God be with you till we meet again.

I love you.

Rick