

Answers for Adversity

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This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

My father died when I was only three years old. Several difficult years later I heard the story of how he had signed a life insurance policy but had not submitted it for application. It stayed on his dresser for a number of weeks and then he died suddenly. There was our family of seven with no daddy and no insurance.

Now, that was some kind of adversity that our family had to face at that moment and for many years afterward. Those circumstances were not my fault. My father died and I had nothing to do with it. The struggles my family endured were not something we enjoyed, but they did teach us some things about character and hard work and how those things relate to getting ahead in life.

It wasn't until I came to know Jesus Christ nearly twenty years later that I really understood how to address that adversity. God showed me a new and living way. With cords of love, I

was drawn to His throne of grace, where I can find help in my times of need.

This booklet is about adversity and the answers we have for it. These answers come from the Word of God. When we receive that truth in the power of the Holy Spirit, it floods our souls with peace and life. My hope is that after reading this, you will be able to “be of good cheer” no matter what may come your way.

Chapter One

BE OF GOOD CHEER

“And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you” (John 16:22).

“And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

“And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

“And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

“And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

“For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?

“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy

bed, and go unto thine house.

“And he arose, and departed to his house.

“But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men” (Matthew 9:1-8).

I have found it very interesting that the phrase “be of good cheer” appears seven times in the Bible. On every occasion, it is said when the adversity surrounding the situation is very, very bad. God did not say “be of good cheer” when times were good. No, He said it when times were not so good.

In Matthew 9, a man stricken with the palsy was brought to Jesus. The Lord recognized their faith and said to the man, “Son, be of good cheer.” He had a terrible disease. He wasn’t sure how his visit with Jesus would turn out, but the first words he got were these: “Son, be of good cheer.”

In Matthew 14:24, a storm was raging on the Sea of Galilee, and the disciples who went with Jesus were in a panic. Then they saw Him walking toward them on the water. At first they thought that they were seeing a ghost. But then He spoke, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

Like the disciples in the boat, too many people allow adverse circumstances to control their

hearts. God has an answer for us in those situations, and it is “be of good cheer.”

In John 16, Jesus explained to His disciples just how many things they would face as they went on in the call of God. “You will be scattered, and I will stand alone,” He told them. “Expect tribulation, for you are not of this world.” But then Jesus added this: “Be of good cheer; for I have overcome the world.” Here, on the evening before He went to Calvary, Jesus proclaimed the ramifications of His crucifixion: the Finished Work victory! He knew what the Cross would accomplish despite the devil’s plan to annihilate Him.

It Shall Be As It Was Told Me

“And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

“But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

“And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among

you, but of the ship.

“For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

“Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

“Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me” (Acts 27:20-25).

Paul’s conviction was that everything would turn out just as God told him it would. Raging storms or raging demons were not going to deter the purpose of God, which was for Paul to get to Rome and share his faith.

There were problems for Paul in Jerusalem. He was wrongly accused, arrested, scourged, and targeted for death. It was a terrible time for him, but Christ stood by Paul and said, “Be of good cheer.”

God never tells us that things are going to be “good.” Never once does He say there will always be blessings. He does, however, tell us to be of good cheer. God has never commanded someone to do something that he cannot do. Behind everything that God tells us to do, there is His omnipotence. Divine power gives unto us all things that “pertain unto life and godliness”

(2 Peter 1:3). We have God's nature dwelling within us in the Person of the Holy Spirit. We have His knowledge. We have His presence.

Are you not sure how you are going to pay the rent? Be of good cheer and allow God to help your unbelief as you receive His Word. You may be in one of the lousiest marriages that ever existed. Be of good cheer and allow God to teach you His way in your wilderness.

Chapter Two

CONTENT IN ANY STATE

Paul's life reveals to us that behind every command of God is His provision and His peace. The joy God gives us, no man can take away, neither can any woman take it away. Elijah apparently didn't understand this truth too well. After being used by God to embarrass and destroy the prophets of the idol Baal (1 Kings 18), news came that Queen Jezebel was after him. Elijah took off and didn't stop running for a day (1 Kings 19).

Conditions can never control my mind. They can try. They can clamor for my attention. They can make a lot of noise in an effort to influence my decisions. But my will is my will, and I can exercise it to think with God. I can say to myself, "God has told me, 'Be of good cheer.'" As I think with God so am I. My decisions reveal the level of trust I have in God's integrity. The things I go through are allowed to reveal my heart toward

God's commandments.

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:11-13).

God has told me to be content in whatsoever state I am in. If I cannot be content, then either I am lying or God is lying. Numbers 23:19 says that God cannot lie, so the problem lies with me and with the content of my heart. I cannot be content without having content from the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Draw Near When in Need

When we are in need, that is when we most need church fellowship. In drawing near to the Body of Christ, I draw near to Christ Himself. Circumstances should not dictate my decision to participate in the local assembly. Instead, conviction and conversion should lead me to be more and more active as the day of the Lord

approaches. Time is short, the days are evil, and we must redeem the time God has given us.

Remember this: No man can take our joy from us. The peace we have is not like the world's peace. Projections may come at us from the world's atmosphere, but we do not have to give them a voice in our lives. We choose to hear the Voice that speaks to us from the pages of Scripture. We choose to allow the Holy Spirit to affect our decisions with His still, small voice in our hearts. That voice says to us, "Take the narrow way. Walk in it, and you will not fall into destruction."

Tribulation, sickness, storms. What is God's answer to us for these? "Be of good cheer." How can I be of good cheer when these things are happening? Accept God's Truth and refuse to be controlled by circumstances. I cannot enjoy the faith of divine providence when I am living in circumstances or feelings. I need to believe God's promises.

Chapter Three

CONFESS VICTORY

I can remember a time during a prayer meeting when pain just kept trying to get the best of me. I refused to confess that pain. The devil was not going to stop me from entering into prayer and worship with God.

Satan tries to bully believers with circumstances. It is just like the killer who roamed around our area a couple of years ago. He enjoyed terrorizing the people in and around Washington, D.C. But once he was caught and did not have his gun anymore, he was begging for people to understand why he was doing what he was doing. He was a bully until he lost his advantage.

When bullies face a challenge, they back down. When we stand up and resist Satan, he flees from us. He is desperate to avoid being caught in his lies. We simply need to make sure that our minds remain focused and objective to-

ward God.

That will give us God's peace.

Beat Back the Bully

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor-

inthians 15:51-58).

Death is the great tool that Satan tries to use against us. So many troubles and frustrations are directly related to the fear of death—but that fear has been conquered. That very real enemy has been defeated. The Cross did that for us. Resurrection revealed and validated the completeness and totality of Jesus' victory over death.

There has never been a time when the believer has lost a battle. Our victories may be delayed, but we don't lose battles because God always causes us to triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14). That is His promise to us.

Physics studies have shown that every word that is spoken creates an impression that affects the universe. It is sort of like dropping a pebble in a pond. The rock goes splash and the ripples go out. We speak, and we create ripples—vibrations that radiate out from our words, and these vibrations continue on and on through space and time.

As believers, we should cultivate positive vibrations, positive waves of faith that promote, produce, and magnify God's wisdom. The more I amplify the promises of God, the more life will come as a result of my faith.

This is the fruit of righteousness (Philippians 1:11; Hebrews 12:11). We are experiencing the bottom line of God's character. We possess a positive and absolute certainty that all the battles—even the battle against death itself—have been won for us.

CONCLUSION

“At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

“Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.

“The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

“Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry” (Jeremiah 31:1-4).

God addresses our problems in four ways:

First, He says be of good cheer.

Second, He tells us to be content in whatsoever state we are in.

Third, He gives us joy that can never be taken away from us.

And, fourth, He gives us peace that surpasses all understanding to establish our hearts.

This is how we find grace in the wilderness.

What are you looking for in your wilderness? Do you only see more pain, or do you see abundant grace? God will supply grace that is more than sufficient to meet every one of your needs.

What will it be—God's provision, or your problem? You have the answers. They are in your Bible. Choose the provisions from the promises of His Word.

Great attacks and suffocating circumstances may come at you. But through those things, expect God to bring in a new understanding of Himself. Answer adversity by choosing to live by faith in the Son of God. Rest in His victory and let Him joy over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).