

Faith must be tough

Mark 8:31-36 NKJV - Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection - ³¹ And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. ³³ But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! **For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.**"

Take Up the Cross and Follow Him - ³⁴ When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, "**Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.**" ³⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses 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."

1 Peter 1:7 NKJV - ⁷ that the **genuineness (Or Trials) 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,

- **"When you go through hard times you get tougher!"**
- "I believe this fact explains that through difficulties and stress, we often invite **the Lord 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.

Psalm 91:1 - Safety of Abiding in the Presence of God – He who dwells in the secret place (*The heavens declare the glory of God*) of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

- **And what excites me about all of that is that it strengthens my faith.**
- **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, compared to other peoples situations.
- 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.

It doesn't matter what it is...

- You can have everything right in your 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.

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.

- People today are still **tortured to death** because of their religious beliefs
- 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 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...
- We ignore the fact that **other peoples children are dyeing** right now.
- We are upset when **our electric is cut off** for a few hours...
- 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”!

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 Mesquite 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 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 11:1-3 - The People Complain

11 Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard *it*, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed *some* in the outskirts of the camp. ²Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched. ³So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the LORD had burned among them.

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.**

Hebrews 11:1-3 – Faith In Action - By Faith We Understand - 11 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ² For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony.

³ **By faith** we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

The Faith of the Patriarchs

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*,

By Faith They Overcame

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.

³⁶ **Still others** had trial of **mockings and scourgings**, yes, and of **chains and imprisonment**. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, ***being destitute, afflicted, tormented—***

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 everything is falling apart kind of toughness**

CLOSE:

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.

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 than to watch someone claw their way out of tragedy with their faith intact.

- 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.

That's tough faith

Tough faith

Philippians 4:11-13 - Not that I speak in regard to need, **for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:** ¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things **I have learned** both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ ***I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.***

PRAISE TEAM:

Do you realize where 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*** - Not that I speak in regard to need, **for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:**