

Keeping the Heart in the Season of Need

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- [0 : 0 0] So imagine if God took away your current hardship,! It's always better to endure outward troubles while enjoying God's favor than to live in ease with a troubled conscience, right?
- Proverbs 18, 14, a broken spirit, who can bear? Think about Job. God allowed Satan to buffet him severely.
- Job lost his wealth, his health, even his children, and yet in all of this, God set limits. Satan could not destroy Job's soul. And in the same way, God places boundaries on what he permits in our lives.
- He knows exactly how much we can bear by his grace. For the Christian, if you still have the favor of God, you are beyond rich.
- No earthly hardship can bar you from his throne of grace. Flavel puts it beautifully. If adversity and poverty could bar you from access to God, it were indeed a deplorable condition.
- [1 : 3 6] But so far from this, you may go to him as freely as ever. You can still pray. You can still open your Bible and find comfort. You can still know that God hears every single one of your cries, and he knows exactly what you need.
- You still have that. It also helps to remember that others are carrying burdens that we've been spared from. Somewhere today, a believer is sitting in a prison cell for their faith.
- Nothing more. Somewhere a family is mourning the death of a child. Somewhere a Christian is facing persecution. And this is not to make us feel guilty. That's not the point.
- But to stir up gratitude for what we have. How good God is dealing with us. When Israel complained in the wilderness about their lack of food, or food they didn't like anyway, what did they forget?
- They forgot the misery they had in Egypt, didn't they? And we're not really that different. It's so easy to forget how much God has already done.
- [2 : 5 2] And our grumbling often suggests that God has treated us somehow unfairly when he has been far more generous than we even deserve. If we look further, again we see that the worst fate would be to live and die without Christ.
- But as a Christian, that's not your destiny. You have been redeemed. Jesus said, For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? If you have lost worldly comforts, but kept your soul safe in Christ, you have won a far greater prize.
- It doesn't even compare. Paul calls our suffering light and momentary compared to the eternal weight of glory that is coming.
- You may have lost some earthly things, but you've gained Christ, who is the pearl of great price. So steady your heart with this thought that God has set boundaries on your trial.
- It could have been worse, but in his mercy it's not. Read 1 Corinthians 10.13. He promises that he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.
- [4 : 1 6] And better yet, he promises that all things, Romans 8.28, even this hardship that you might be going through, will work together for your good.

Somehow, someday, it will work together for your good. Maybe the Lord is actually protecting you from some unseen dangers.

Maybe more wealth or more comfort would actually lead you into pride. Remember the prayer in Proverbs 30, give me neither poverty nor riches, lest I be full and deny you, or lest I be poor and steal.

God knows exactly what we need to keep our hearts close to him. So take time to count not only what has happened, but also what has not happened.

Thank God for the mercies that maybe you've been taking for granted. Thank him for his protections, even those you can't see.

[5 : 20] And this will perhaps turn your murmuring into trust and your despair into hope. God is better to us than we deserve. Even in our trials, his mercy is at work.

So number five, remember, suffering is very short-lived. Suffering is short-lived. One of the best ways to keep your heart steady in a season of need is to look at your suffering through the lens of eternity.

What feels heavy, what feels endless right now is actually very brief. It's passing. It will not last forever.

John Flavel puts it very simply. If it be bad now, it will be better shortly. His advice is to hold on.

Better days are coming, either here or in heaven. Even the longest life, according to the Bible, is just a vapor.

[6 : 21] It's just a mist. It's over just like that. And that's compared to the endless joys that await the Christian. The Bible often reminds us to lift our eyes beyond this present trouble.

Paul says, for this light, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. So, what feels unbearable now will one day be revealed to be very light and short next to the greatness of what God is preparing for His people.

every day we cling to Christ through hardship is working toward a reward we can't even imagine now. Paul, who knew suffering firsthand, said, I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Now, that sounds just like what I just read, but he repeats himself in multiple letters. It's true. It needs to be heard. One glimpse of Christ's face, one moment in God's glory will make every trouble we ever experienced seem very small.

And again, this is not to make light of the struggles we have. This is to show how wonderful our future in Christ really is.

[7 : 50] And it's coming sooner than we think. But we're not only looking toward eternity, we also have reason to hope that God can change our situation in this life sooner than we expect.

right? Flavel paints a picture of a traveler whose money is almost gone. Now, if he knows his journey is almost over, he's not distressed.

He says, you know, my money's almost spent, but my journey's almost finished too, so that's fine. Well, we as Christians are pilgrims that are making our way home to the Father's house, right?

Hebrews 13, 14. Here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Every step brings us a little bit closer and a little bit closer.

And when we remember this, it gives strength to endure maybe a cold night. As an early Christian martyr said before his death, the winter is sharp and cold, but heaven is warm and comfortable.

[8 : 58] In other words, the discomfort will soon give way to everlasting comfort. And very often, God brings relief before the end of this journey.

Trials often have a season. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. Many believers can tell you that just when the darkness felt the deepest, when their needs were at their worst, God moved.

Think of that widow of Zarephath. She thought she would eat her last meal and die. But God sustained her daily.

The same God who fed Elijah by the ravens. He can feed you too. You may think your barrel of meal may just last for a short while, but God may refill it tomorrow.

And then again the day after that, and again the day after that, and every day that we're worried that he's not going to fill the next day, here he comes and he fills it again. And if he doesn't, and if he doesn't, maybe it's because your journey's end is closer than you think.

[10 : 18] This is one of the most powerful things that Flabel pointed out to me. He essentially says either way, your need will not last forever. Whether by earthly provision or by calling you home, God will supply what you need.

So even the worst case scenario, death, is for the believer simply a doorway to glory. Paul said to depart and be with Christ is far better.

Death for the Christian is not a defeat. It's the greatest victory we could ever know. Because of this, we can say with confidence that all possible outcomes for the believer's end is God's goodness.

There's no other end to the story. Either he sustains us here or he welcomes us home. Either way, we are safe in his hands. We have nothing to worry about.

So when discouragement whispers that this trial will never end, you're stuck, you'll be here forever, remind yourself of all of these promises. John 16, 20, Jesus says, you will be sorrowful but your sorrow will turn into joy.

[11 : 39] When you feel your strength slipping away, remember Hebrews 10, 37, in a little while the coming one will come and will not delay. The night may feel very long at times but the dawn is in fact almost here.

Suffering is very short-lived and glory is forever. So let that hope anchor your heart. As James reminds us, James 5, 11, behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast and that steadfastness will not be in vain.

The Lord, full of compassion, full of mercy, will show himself faithful to the end. Number six, trust God as Father.

When we walk through seasons of need, one of the sweetest things to remember is that God is our Father. and He is our Father not only in the Trinitarian theological sense.

If you belong to Christ, He is your Father. Personally, you have been adopted into His family with all of the rights and privileges that come along with being His child.

[12 : 56] The God who rules the universe is tenderly watching over you as His son or daughter. Psalm 103 says, as a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear Him.

Just as a father would never ignore the cries of his hungry child, your Heavenly Father will not turn a deaf ear to your needs. He sees, He knows, He cares.

Jesus taught us to pray, our Father, our Father. Why? Well, He's reminding us that we are approaching God as His children.

He said, look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

If God feeds the sparrows, what will He do for you? Jesus also said, your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all, your food, your clothing, your shelter.

[14 : 03] Like a wise parent, He knows your needs. He knows your needs before you even ask for them. You do not have to convince Him to care, by the way. He already does.

And not only does your Father know, but He is willing and He is certainly able to provide. Jesus said, which one of you, if His Son asks Him for bread, will give Him a stone?

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him?

So even flawed parents know how to give what's needed to their children. How much more are perfect Father in Heaven? And notice those words, how much more.

How much more. God's goodness and His wisdom go far beyond anything we have known. Sometimes He answers differently than we expect, but He always answers giving better than what we could have asked according to His perfect wisdom.

[15 : 17] Flavel reminds us that when we doubt God's care, we act like forgetful children. How many times has God come through for you? You know, can't you look back and see His hand providing and guiding and rescuing often at the last moment maybe?

In Isaiah 49, 15, God says, Can a woman forget her nursing child? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.

He glorifies God when we trust Him with what we sometimes call a childlike faith. He invites us to take all of our anxieties, all of our cares, and cast them upon Him because, we're told, He cares for you.

So tell Him what you need. Keep asking. Keep trusting. Your Father is not annoyed by your persistent prayers. In fact, He delights in them. He commands us to pray exactly that way.

Of course, trusting God as Father also means trusting His discipline. And yes, a loving parent allows a child to face hard things, often to teach us very important lessons.

[16 : 35] Hebrews 12, 6, For the Lord disciplines those He loves. His hand is firm. loving, loving, loving, a loving hand of a wise father will train His children.

So, sometimes we do encounter that. But it's still a good thing. So, steady your heart with this very simple truth. My Father knows.

My Father cares. My Father is able. Always. My Father is faithful. Your Father, the Almighty God, holds you tenderly in His hands.

As Flavel said, If I persist in want of what is good and needful for me, either my Father knows not my wants, or has not wherewith to supply them, or regards not what becomes of me, which of these shall I charge upon Him?

Of course, the answer is not one of them. Trust Him. He will not fail you. Last but not least, number seven.

[17 : 46] Understand that poverty is not sin. Poverty, hardships, outward needs, they are not sins. I think it's easy for believers to slip into a sense of shame.

when hard times come. We may feel like our poverty is a sign of failure. Maybe we think God is displeased with us.

Maybe we're to blame. But there is a difference between sin and affliction. Your poverty is not sin. It's an affliction.

Being in hardship or need does not mean you have necessarily done something wrong. It does not necessarily mean God is punishing you. Many of God's dearest children have walked through deep seasons of need and they shined with godliness all the way through it.

Again, think of our Lord Jesus Christ. Perfectly sinless. Perfectly pleasing to the Father and yet lived as a poor man. Peter and John said, I have no silver and gold.

[19 : 01] I don't have any money. Not because they were lazy. Not because they were unfaithful. But because that was their circumstances. That was their lot in their ministries.

The church in Smyrna was poor. Yet Jesus said in Revelation 2, you're not poor. You're rich. You are rich.

James reminds us, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom? Believe it or not, poverty is often the ground where faith grows best.

Now, sometimes poverty does result from sin, wastefulness, laziness, addiction. And if your conscience accuses you, well, by all means, confess it.

Turn from it. And know that God's mercy is greater still. But if your conscience is clear, don't arbitrarily accuse yourself, right?

[20 : 04] As Flavel said, if you have not by sinful means brought it upon yourself, and if it be but an affliction, it may be more easily borne or carried.

Job suffered terribly. Yet, what did God say about him? He is blameless and upright. You remember in John 9 when Jesus corrected his disciples, they assumed that a blind man's blindness was due to his sin or maybe his parents' sin.

And he said in that case, it was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. He was blind his whole life so that God may display his works, his power, his glory, and he may be doing the same thing in our own trials.

So, you've got to be on guard against the world's lies. The world says success is proof of your worth. And poverty, well, that's just shameful. But in God's eyes, poverty, at least poverty endured with faith, is very honorable.

Think of this. When the world saw Christ on the cross, what did they see? They saw defeat, utter defeat. But what did God see?

[21 : 34] Oh, the greatest victory ever. True success in God's kingdom is measured by faithfulness, not finances. Right? Now, if you grieve because you can't maybe give enough, you can't serve enough as maybe you once did, you have to keep in mind that God still sees that willing heart of yours.

If you can't give much, I think he accepts the longing and the compassion within you. Look at 2 Corinthians 8.12. Also, prayer, encouragement, kindness, these are precious and free offerings to him.

Wonderful things. In times of need, you may also feel new temptations, envy, bitterness, dishonesty. So poverty has its dangers, but, of course, so does prosperity.

Proverbs warns of both. Wealth tempts toward pride, among other things. Poverty actually forces us to lean on the Lord more.

You see, hardship can be a blessing in disguise because it does all kinds of things. It can cultivate humility and dependence and compassion and so on. Most importantly, though, poverty does not change your standing in Christ.

[23 : 03] James says, James 1.9, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation. In Christ, you are highly exalted and your worth is secured forever.

By the way, if others help you along the way, don't reject that. Receive their help with gratitude and with dignity. Sometimes we struggle with that.

We don't like charity, right? Well, behind every human hand of help stands your Father who is probably answering your prayers. In short, don't let poverty weigh you down with a sense of false guilt.

As long as you are pursuing righteousness and you are trusting the Lord, your need is not a curse. It is a trial that can actually bear very sweet fruit.

You can have little in this world and still live a holy, honorable life to the glory of God. Your Savior had no place to lay His head.

[24 : 09] And now He reigns. Follow Him faithfully. Poverty, needs, they'll test you, but it can never separate you from the love of your Father.

Let's pray. Father, You are so good and so faithful in all Your ways. You are wise in all that You ordain and Your steadfast love never fails.

You are our shepherd, our provider, the keeper of our souls, and yet we confess that in seasons of need our hearts are often anxious. We're often slow to trust You.

We sometimes measure Your care by our comfort rather than by Your Word, Your promises. So, Lord, forgive us for doubting Your goodness at times, for forgetting all that You have already done for us.

We thank You, Lord, for the countless mercies You have shown. We thank You for giving us Your Son, for meeting our greatest need through His death and resurrection. We thank You for Your Word, which gives us these promises to hold on to when we feel weak.

[25 : 18] Thank You for surrounding us with reminders of Your faithfulness. Lord, I'd ask that You would strengthen us to walk by faith and not by sight.

We ask that You would guard our hearts with Your peace. Teach us to trust You more, to rejoice in Your truth, to find hope in the glory that is yet to come.

Provide us what we need according to Your perfect wisdom, Lord, and help us to glorify You with everything we have. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.