

Deepening The Walk

Faith Takes Courage

(If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kelly Dixon by email kelly@ladiesforJesus.com)

When you think of a courageous person, do you think of yourself? Even though many of us don't feel like we are cowardly, we don't feel like we are very courageous either. Throughout God's Word He tells us to be strong and courageous. He doesn't expect us to back down to life challenges. However, He doesn't expect us to face them on our own either. When we are courageous at battling the trials in our lives, God will strengthen our faith. Let's look at how He does this?

Courage builds our faith and brings restoration.

Read 1 Peter 5:6-10 and answer the following questions:

1. Why should we humble ourselves under God's mighty hand?
2. What should we do with our anxiety and why?
3. What does "be self-controlled and alert" mean in verse 8?
4. According to verse 9, how do we resist the devil?
5. Write out verse 10 here:

If we are courageous and fight life's battles with the strength of God, there is a promise at the end – restoration. God Himself will restore us and make us strong, firm and steadfast. If we give up or back down, we will not be restored. Instead we will usually stay in the midst of the trial.

The set back of a shipwreck.

When we are blindsided with trials, many times we feel like we can't go on. Usually it starts with a major happening in our life, then our attitudes are changed for the negative. As other life trials start coming our way, we have the wrong attitude to face them and we feel like we are in the midst of a storm with one thing after the other coming after us. It is like being shipwrecked on an island and the only thing you can do is sit and think "woe is me." This is were the devil wants to destroy our mission for the Lord. That is why it is important for us to take courage from the very beginning and face the shipwreck in God's strength. Let's take a look at Paul, who I believe was more than a conqueror. Paul, who faced many trials during his pursuit of the Lord's mission for his life, was once faced with a literal shipwreck. Let's look at how he faced it from the onset.

Read Acts 27:13-44 for the full story of the storm and shipwreck Paul went through while he was a prisoner and answer the following questions:

1. What does it mean by "they thought they had obtained what they wanted" in verse 13?
2. Review verses 14 – 20 and list the ways they tried to "weather the storm" on their own.
3. Feeling destitute to the end of their lives coming soon, what were the encouraging words that Paul told them in verses 22-26? Do these words sound like words from someone who doesn't have faith? Is this the type of attitude that you take when you are faced with a tragedy in your life?
4. Looking through the rest of the story, how does Paul continue to be courageous and show his faith in God?

This account of the Scriptures reminds me a lot of how the trials of life hit us. We are going along fine and enjoying life. We think we have everything under control so we "drop our anchor" and plant ourselves right in the middle of a storm. As we weather the storm, we try our best to do it in our own strength, usually not even thinking about turning to the Father for help. It is when we are destitute for failure that we finally listen to the Word of God. How many trials we could "weather" better if we would take courage and turn to God's strength initially?

Final Reflections: As Christians, our purpose is to bring glory to the Lord. He has a plan for each of our lives and it is a prosperous plan (Jeremiah 29:11). He allows trials in our lives to strengthen us in knowing that He is our hope, He is our strength, and when we trust in Him, He will lead us to victory. We must not allow Satan to take our eyes off Jesus from the onset. This is why it is important that we start by facing our trials with courage. Starting in this way, we will benefit the blessing of being restored in the end.

- Kelly Dixon

Your Turn to Reflect: James 3:2-3 tells us, “*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.*” Through this Scripture, we know that God allows trials and tribulations in our lives to strengthen our faith and to develop perseverance. Think over the trials you have been through lately in your life. Consider the following reasons that God may be taking you through that trial and think about whether you are facing the trial courageously, strengthening your faith, and developing perseverance.

- **Faith trials draw our attention to Him.** Sometimes worldly pursuits coerce us to drift away from Jesus. If we encounter a situation for which we have no solution, our focus comes back to Him as we begin to pray and look for a way out of the trial.
- **Faith trials teach endurance.** We develop the stamina to bear up under heavy loads without discouragement because we trust that God will see us through. He increases our capacity by applying slight pressure. When we prove we can handle a little, He adds more, constantly working on our witness until we shine brightly for Him.
- **Faith trials train us for higher service.** We must endure and keep our attention on Him so that we are prepared to work anywhere in His kingdom. God designs opportunities for every believer, shifting us to more responsible areas of service as we grow in faith.
- **Faith trials glorify God.** The greatest praise we can give to our heavenly Father is to walk hopefully through a dark valley. It is then that we are a living example of His faithfulness and trustworthiness for everyone to see.