



**“What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger!”**

Kelly Clarkson

*In 1888, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche first stated, “Out of life’s school of war—what doesn’t kill me, makes me stronger.” Nietzsche does not seem to think that all suffering will result in strength, but rather that he is suggesting one should take suffering as an opportunity to build strength.*

**You were running the race so well. Who has held you back from following to the truth?**

*Galatians 5:7 NLT-SE*

- **What does it mean to “run so well?”**... Obviously, someone is watching you run, observing your actions, watching your moves and ending up with a specific impression of what you are doing. It also means that they are comparing the way you are currently running to the way you were running before. You were running well, now, not so much. **What is going on? What changed?**

- **Who held you back?**... How does someone in a race hold you back? How does that actually work? One way is to think of what it’s like to run with freedom. When you are free to run, you are unhindered. You aren’t messing around adjusting your number, or making sure you shoe is tied perfectly. All these things are nothing but distractions, meant to slow you down, trying to make you feel hindered in your efforts to reach your goal. Enough of these hindrances. **It’s time to run with freedom!**

- <sup>35</sup> Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have **trouble** or **calamity**, or are **persecuted**, or **hungry**, or **destitute**, or in danger, or threatened with death? <sup>36</sup> (As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are **killed** every day; we are being **slaughtered** like sheep.”) <sup>37</sup> No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. <sup>38</sup> And I am convinced that **nothing can ever separate us from God’s love**. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. <sup>39</sup> No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:35–39 NLT-SE)

- **Following the truth...** When you are following the truth, you are **totally free**. Only falsehood can cause you to be distracted. Even the fear of falsehood can make you feel like this whole thing is a joke, like nothing is really what they say it is. There is no truth, so why worry? But, there is indisputable truth.



- *"I speak eternal truth," Jesus said. "When you sin you are not free. You've become a slave in bondage to your sin. And slaves have no permanent standing in a family, like a son does, for a son is a part of the family forever. So, if the Son sets you free from sin, then become a true son and be unquestionably free!"* John 8:36 (TPT)
- *O Israel, keep hoping, keep trusting, and keep waiting on the Lord, for he is tenderhearted, kind, and forgiving. He has a thousand ways to set you free!* Psalm 130:7 (TPT)

## - THE ADVERSITY IS WERE TALKING ABOUT IS REAL, NOT IMAGINED

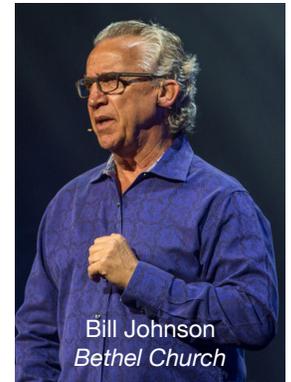
- **Following Jesus' lead...** Pursuing faith IN Jesus, to begin to walk in the faith OF Jesus

- Make no mistake, our relationship with Jesus is one of great faith. **Bill Johnson**, pastor of Bethel Church in Redding puts it this way, **"Real faith doesn't deny a problems existence, it just denies the problem a place of influence."** Are we strong? We are in his might. Our faith is in Jesus to be our strength. When we truly understand this reality, we tend to not push back or make excuses when things do get difficult.

- *If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.* (Prov. 24:10 ESV)

- **If we cannot believe God when circumstances seem to be against us, we do not believe Him at all.** ~ Charles Spurgeon

- Does cultivating this kind of faith guarantee that we won't experience discouragement or weakness? No. We still have to hold on, not give up, bounce back and overcome. The enemy of our soul know this and he has a couple very effective tactics to tap into when he sees us get discouraged. Again, **Bill Johnson** explains, **"If the enemy can't get me to do wrong things, he will wear me to overextend myself and doing the right things."**



- **Sharing in Jesus' suffering...**

- *<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. <sup>25</sup> If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.* (Matt. 16:24–25 NLT-SE)

- **Victor Frankl**, a neurologist, psychiatrist, holocaust survivor and author of Man's Search for Meaning, wrote: **"The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity – even under the most difficult circumstances to add a deeper meaning to his life."**

- **If thou art willing to suffer no adversity, how wilt thou be the friend of Christ?** ~ **Thomas a Kempis**

- Is there any doubt that the battle over our souls is real? The apostle Paul understood this when he wrote to a fledgling group of believers in the city of Corinth who were holding onto their faith in the midst of terrible persecution. He encouraged them with these words, **"We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed."** (2 Cor. 4:8–9 NLT-SE)

- **Enjoying and growing in Jesus' presence and power**

- It is typically not in quiet, peaceful, pleasant times that we see the face of Jesus. Many times, we see his face most clearly when we are going through our most difficult times. As **Sarah Young**, author of *Jesus Calling* says, **"In the darkness of adversity, you are able to see more clearly the radiance of My Face."**

- Jeremiah 12:5 says, *“If racing against mere men makes you tired, how will you race against horses? If you stumble and fall on open ground, what will you do in the thickets near the Jordan?”* **Struggles** are meant to make us better, not bitter. Christian prophetic voice, **Francis Frangipane**, warns us of this when he says, *“The conflict will always be beyond your strength. The enemy always pushes us beyond our personal, inbred, preset limits concerning how far we will go for God. The test kills the limits of our humanity, until we are like Christ in everything. We are left with a choice: Become Christlike or gradually shrivel into superficial hypocrites: angry people who have stopped walking with God, who blame others for our bitterness.”*
  - <sup>12</sup> *I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.* <sup>13</sup> *For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.* (Phil. 4:12–13 NLT-SE)
  - *This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.* (Josh. 1:9 NLT-SE)

## - ADVERSITY MIGHT BE JUST THE VERY OPPORTUNITY YOU’VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR

- *Know the importance of the season you’re in and a wise son you will be. But what a waste when an incompetent son sleeps through his **day of opportunity!*** Pr 10:5 (TPT)
- <sup>2</sup> *Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.* <sup>3</sup> *For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.* <sup>4</sup> *So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.* (James 1:2–4 NLT-SE)
- **Sailing into adversity:** It is actually possible to position a boat so that it can move forward into a very strong wind. This maneuver is called “tacking.” There is a way to manage your sail and rudder to allow you to actually make headway when the wind is coming directly towards you from the front.
  - <sup>6</sup> *So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while.* <sup>7</sup> *These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.* (1 Pet. 1:6–7 NLT-SE)
  - <sup>20</sup> *You have allowed me to suffer much hardship, but you will restore me to life again and lift me up from the depths of the earth.* <sup>21</sup> *You will restore me to even greater honor and comfort me once again.* (Psa. 71:20–21 NLT-SE)
- When things get really tough, it is tempting to think that abandoning our faith in Jesus is a viable option. All of us go through adversity. All of us can relate to the temptation to slow down, give up and quit. Pastor **Timothy Keller’s** words shed some light on the truth behind these feelings when he says, *“If Jesus Christ didn't abandon you in his darkness, the ultimate darkness, why would he abandon you now, in yours?”*
  - **You told them that Jesus is the light of your world. Well, now your power has been cut, and they want to see if you can glow in the dark.** ~ **Levi Lusko**
- The Apostle Paul, writing to a frightened and discouraged church in Rome uses these words to lift the spirits of his followers... <sup>3</sup> *We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance.* <sup>4</sup> *And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.* <sup>5</sup> *And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.* (Rom. 5:3–5 NLT-SE)
- It is the love of Jesus that compels us to not let adversity take us out. It has been this way for the church for over 2000 years. Our faith in Jesus not only sustains us, but has convinced us that **LOVE WINS!** This is no time to quit!