



# Faith in Adversity

*“...Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9b).*

When I am troubled or under stress, my natural reaction is to hide away. I don't want to be around people. I don't want anyone to know about my problems. After all I am strong, and I am a faith-filled Christian woman and I can walk through anything.

Ah, wrong!!! I am those things at times but, at other times I am a feeble child needing someone to help me, but content to wallow in my pain and anguish, not wanting my peers to see me like this.

As women, we believe the falsehood strength equates spirituality, and weakness is a lack of faith. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 12:9 that in my weakness His power is made strong. Only when we are at our weakest can God be the strength in us. Our faith is tested regularly—not to destroy us but to build our faith to a point of resting solely in Him. Do we cling tighter to Him when we are being tossed to and fro or do we retreat into our own strength or lack thereof?

*Is that you? Do you have a facade you have to protect?*

*Would revealing the real you destroy the image you have created for yourself?*

Faith in adversity looks like many different things. It is putting one foot in front of the other and walking on when troubles are heavy on your heart. It is prayers prayed and praise offered, even when we don't feel like it. It is knowing in your heart that Jesus really can change your situation. It is relying on Him for answers

When the cares of life and crippling pain come, what we do with our faith can have a mighty impact on our witness. Job is a prime example of how to handle adversity. We have the privilege of

knowing how his suffering came because of the first two chapters of Job. We know God allowed this suffering because Job was such a fine upstanding follower of God. Job had friends and three of them came to comfort him. At the end of their visit, he declared they were “miserable comforters” (Job 16:2).

Faith in adversity applies to us as comforter as well as when we need comforting. Job’s friends certainly had good hearts, or they would not have come from far away to be with him. They would not have sat with him in the wind, rain, heat, and night for seven days in complete silence. They would not have cried, rent their garments, or covered themselves with ashes and dirt.

But they leaned on their own

understanding to offer him words of wisdom. Of course, in their defense they had not read Job 1 and 2. They tried to blame Job for his troubles. Can you imagine being in the kind of pain Job was experiencing and having your dearest friends say it is your fault? Does that change how you deal with someone else’s grief?

The big mistake Job’s friends made was trying to help him with their own understanding. After listening for a very long time, Job answered them in Job 12: 3-9. Job did not elaborate on his own understanding, he simply pointed them to God.

All of us have been on both sides of this situation, those needing comfort and those doing the comforting. You may even be in one of those situations right now.

*If you are a comforter, what do you feel is your role in helping your friend/family to cope?*

*How does that line up with God’s word?*

We don’t always have answers for those suffering. Sometimes they just need our presence and not our pretenses. We are all flesh and blood. Without God’s presence, we could be spouting empty maybe even harmful words.

Just as in Job's time, there will be many well-meaning people who tell you how to handle the adversity that has come your way. There are self-help books and television

psychologists who claim to have all the answers. Paul said in I Corinthians 2:5, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

*Does your faith depend on what the people around you have to say about your adversity? Why or why not?*

We must learn to lean on Jesus. First and foremost, we must run to Him. In I Kings 19, Elijah listened to all the voices around him, wind, earthquakes, fire but God was not in those mighty voices. Verse 12 says, "And after the fire a still small voice." God was there, not in a showy or imposing way, just quiet and all powerful.

Sometimes during our storm, we call out to God and try to hear Him through the raging thunder and the crashing lightning, but we cannot hear Him. Yet, when we get alone with Him and whisper His name, there He is, a still small voice assuring us He is there and we are going to get through it.

We see God's glory on every hand. We can look around and see His power and dominion,

yet in the throes of anguish we forget. We forget what He has already done for us. We lament, whine, and twist our hands as we go through the bitter valley. Pain blinds us.

If we lift the veil to see the sunlight on the other side, we can begin to move toward healing, strength, and acceptance. The acceptance that alone we are not able to bear this burden. But we have never really been alone at all, have we?

I love the song that says, "You hear me when I call; You are my morning song; though darkness fills the night, it cannot hide the light. Whom shall I fear? The one who reigns forever, He is a friend of mine. The God of angel armies is always by my side ("Whom Shall I Fear" Chris Tomlin, 2013).

*Where do you look for God? Do you expect to find Him in the thunder?*

*Do you seek quiet time with Him to just listen? Sometimes we need to be the listener and not the talker.*

*Can you share a time when God touched you in a valley and gave you strength to walk out of your storm?*

In Psalm 89:9 David writes, “Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.” When I am amid adversity, it literally feels like waves washing over me. If you have been to the beach and stood in the waves and rocked back and forth as they tossed you around, you understand that feeling. Complete and utter helplessness. But if Christ is your Lord, He will either calm the raging sea or hold you while you walk through it.

I Corinthians 1:9 assures us, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” Our faithfulness to God lies in His promise of faithfulness to us. Because we know He's got our back, we can push through the adversities of life with confidence knowing He will never let us fall.

*How has God held you in the past?*

*If He has been there for you, can you trust Him with today's worries?*

Trust is the basis for all our peace. Do you find that trusting Jesus brings comfort to your spirit? "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). Can you remember a time when your path seemed dark and you had to trust God to lead you through it?

Lamentations 3:22-23 gives us hope in God's compassion, "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Mercies, compassion, faithfulness—those are the promises to the child of God. Compassion and mercy: new every day.

*Why is mercy so important in a storm? What does mercy look like to you daily?*

There is no wrong or right way to feel when troubles come. We all feel differently because we are different. For the faith-based woman our actions should all be the same. We should draw up close to the fire, be still, and listen because He will speak to us. Sometimes in a still small voice. Sometimes through the hugs from a friend. Sometimes in calming our spirits as the storm rages. You can rest assured though, spirit-filled warrior of Christ, He will not be too far away to help you.

Let your faith shine because those who are watching you will be encouraged and strengthened to move forward, too. See it's not about you, it's about Him. Your troubles will glorify Him when you remain faithful during the trials. He is faithful so we can be faithful, too.

Last May 5th, my sister had a mini stroke. That is what I thought when they rushed her to the hospital, but the first report after the MRI threw our world into a tailspin. She had a brain tumor. Upon more testing they found she had lung cancer also. She was 63, my middle sister, and the one person in my life that could make me laugh until an accident occurred (yes, that is what I mean). She was a funny, wonderful person and you would have loved her if you met her.

To make a long story short, Susan lived another nine months and I spent many hours with her, taking her for chemo and other doctor appointments.

We talked about a lot of things many frivolous, but one thing we discussed at length was God's unfailing mercy and faithfulness. Susan witnessed about Jesus to everyone she met. I felt ashamed in her presence because I lacked her faith in the face of this adversity. I asked her how she was able to move on this way and she said "trust."

Trust was the answer. Because if I truly trusted Jesus, then I had to know this was His plan. He was working for good in her life and for instruction in mine. I slowly began to accept and even embrace what God was teaching me as we walked through this storm together.

I had not called out to Him in trust and obedience but in pain and bewilderment. I learned over this course of time how to walk through adversity and keep my faith intact. I hope that I have been able to share it with you as well.

*What is your first reaction when you get a call that throws your whole world into chaos?*

*Do you have a close friend that you trust?*


*Would praise be a fleeting thought during this time or difficult to do?*

We all need a game plan when we are blindsided. It helps to have our minds already made up about what to do when adversity comes. No one likes the thought of weathering a storm. Once we realize that the valley is where we grow and the valley is placed there by a loving, caring Father Who is interested in helping us grow, we can face the storm with confidence.

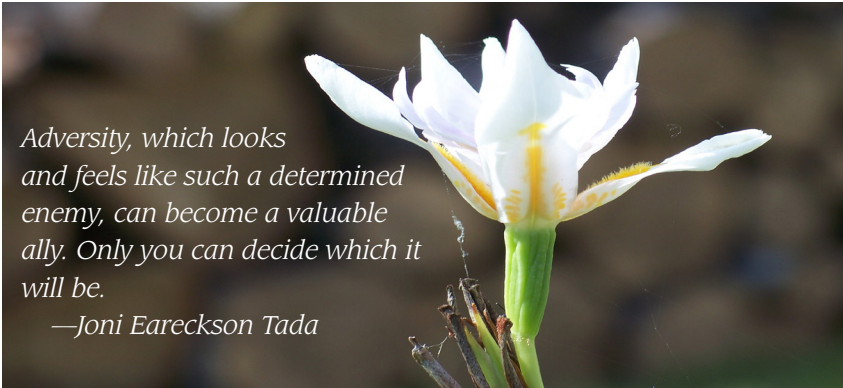
*What would be your first line of defense in a coming storm?*

*Who would you surround yourself with to help carry this load?*

*Is it ok to ask for help? If not why?*

What Scripture is your fighting verse? Keep it handy because God made it special to you for a reason. Hang onto it and know that His Word never fails. 

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*Adversity, which looks  
and feels like such a determined  
enemy, can become a valuable  
ally. Only you can decide which it  
will be.*

*—Joni Eareckson Tada*