



Do Not Lose Heart

Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory. [Eph 3:13](#)

As we've previously seen in our walk through his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul's main theme is the supremacy of Christ over all, and his personal testimony regarding the call of Christ to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. This was a major life change for Paul – a devout Pharisee and “Hebrew of Hebrews”, highly trained in all the Jewish laws and traditions ([Phil 3:4-6](#)). Christ's call cost Paul everything.

Paul wrote this letter while imprisoned in Rome, about 30 years after Christ was crucified. Not only had he been imprisoned, but Paul had also been through ‘hell on earth’ in his mission to preach the gospel. In [2 Corinthians 11:24-29](#), Paul laments:

Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.

Christ's words, in a vision to Ananias, certainly came true, and it is no doubt in all these terrible situations that Paul recalled what was said of him:

But the Lord said to him [Ananias], “Go, for he [Paul] is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.” [Acts 9:15-16](#)

Life is challenging. We have times on the mountaintops, and we have times in the valleys. For the true servant of Christ, our life can often be much harder than an unrepentant sinner's because



we don't conform to the world's standards. Nowhere in Scripture does God promise a happy, easy, materialistic life. In fact, quite the opposite is true. We wrestle and twist against difficult times, but these are where our faith is solidified and strengthened because we see God's awesome and mighty work most prevalently! And sometimes, our trials and sufferings are for others – *they* see God's power and the strength of our faith as we endure hard times with joy and without complaint. We may suffer for another's glory, and that is what Paul was talking about in our verse today.

I admit, this is one of the hardest things to put into practice. I'm pretty terrible at it, to be honest. Grumbling, complaining, and even arguing with God over my situation come very naturally. About 10 years ago when a major tragedy struck my family, I literally yelled to God, "What are you doing?! You really screwed up, Lord!" Thankfully the Lord is patient and forgiving and did not immediately strike me with lightning! When He tore down my little self-built kingdom, much good came from it. I didn't see it immediately, but over the years I have grown thankful for it and can now see that God knew EXACTLY what He was doing! Although I was in much mental pain and anguish, God still, even in my extreme weakness, allowed me to be a witness of His strength to others. The Lord always knows best.

Paul's note to his church about not losing heart over his tribulations serves as a wonderful reminder to each of us that we're not an island in this life. We seldom see what God is doing behind the curtain of heaven, and in times of suffering it can seem as though He's abandoned us. But He has not! If we are suffering for His cause, His glory, and the glory of His bride, we must count it as a joyful and wonderful blessing! It is a great honor and testament to the faith He has given us when we endure suffering with patience and joy.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. [James 1:2-4](#)

~Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece