

Faith Works – Faith Under Pressure

May 29, 2016 - Pastor Randy Eliason

Garry Patrylo Jr is a good friend of mine. In October of 2012 his father – also a friend of mine - died after a battle with cancer. Two days after the funeral Garry was in upstate NY at a home he and his father purchased and operated as a substance abuse Christian rehab. While removing carpet on the floor in basement, he poured a solvent on the floor to remove the glue. He did not pay attention to the fact that he was working right by the hot water heater. The burner kicked on and ignited the fumes. The room went up in a ball of fire. He was rushed to Syracuse University hospital w/ 2 & 3 degree burns to his face arms and legs. We received the call the next morning about the accident and went to the hospital. I was praying that God would give us the words to say to encourage Garry and Katherine. Garry said, "Randy I know that God is going to do something great in Rockaway and these trials are just the devil trying to stop us." Then, as we began to pray for Garry he ended up leading US in singing praise to God. That day was Saturday morning, October 27, 2012. Garry house, his recently widowed mom's house, and their rented church facility were all located in Rockaway Beach, Queens. Two days later hurricane Sandy devastated their community. His mom's house had a basement full of sand and water. Garry's house took on water up to a few feet on the first floor and the bungalow they rented out was destroyed. Their store front church took on 4 ft. of water, destroying all their furnishings and equipment and leaving the church without a place to meet. All of this while Garry was confined to a hospital bed for the next several weeks, undergoing skin grafts. But in the midst of great tragedy and difficulty Garry & Katherine didn't give up on their call from God or the people of Rockaway Queens. In the hospital Garry led people to the Lord. Today their church is having a greater impact than ever before. Garry and Katherine experienced great physical and emotional pain and stress. Many tears were shed. They experienced fear and discouragement. But through it all they never gave up and they never stopped trusting in their God who they knew was faithful.

Faith works under pressure. James teaches us that faith in God and His word give us a perspective that enables us to respond to our trials in a manner that brings glory to God, good to us, and good to others.

When trials come our way:

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I. Faith looks in...so you can persevere and mature in character. They help us look inside the trial and inside ourselves.

James 1: 2-4

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

James begins his epistle encouraging his readers to view the trials they face as something to be embraced. He tells them to view them as opportunities for growth rather than as overwhelming obstacles from which they must escape. When trials come our way we should:

- A) *Expect* them. Don't be *surprised* by them. (See Jn. 16:33; 1 Pet. 4:12)
- B) *Welcome* them. Trials provide an opportunity for you to grow in *faith* and *wisdom*. (See 1 Peter 1:7)
- C) *Learn* from them. Trials *test* our *faith*. They introduce us to ourselves. They *reveal* our level of trust in God. They show us what is really important to us.
- D) *Mature* from them. Trials help us become more like Christ. Faith enables us to persevere, developing in us the Christ-like character of *perseverance*.

Faith responds to trials differently because it views the purpose and goal of life differently. In order for us to embrace the trials that come our way, we need to see our purpose in life as more than just to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. It is more important for us to be *holy* than it is for us to be *happy*. James states that the goal of enduring trials is not just to grow in our ability to persevere, but also so that we may grow more "mature". Only if we view our primary purpose as being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10), will we be able to see the value and benefit of the trials we face.

Trials are a necessary part of God's process of making us more like Christ. How can we become more like Christ - one whose trials and sufferings were so severe - w/o

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the experience of trials?

Paul expressed this truth when he wrote that nothing was more valuable than knowing Christ and becoming like Christ. He understood knowing Christ to include the experience of the power of the resurrection as well as... Christ's sufferings. Our natural inclination is to evade difficulties; to escape from trials. But the Christian faith teaches us to endure.

1. Trials provide us with the opportunity to learn and develop. There was a little boy who was struggling to put on his own shirt. His mom did not intervene despite his frustration and difficulty. The mom's friend who was observing said, "Aren't you going to help him?" The mom said, "I am!"
2. Trials provide us with the opportunity to experience God's faithfulness. Many Christians don't experience God's faithfulness because they abandon ship right before their breakthrough from God. I wonder how many Christians have quit one hour or one day too early.
3. Trials provide us with the opportunity to encourage others. In 2 Corinthians 1 Paul writes that God comforts us in all our troubles...SO THAT we can comfort others with the comfort we have received. Whatever trials God has brought you through, He has brought you through, not only for your benefit, but so you can help to instill hope in others.

Perseverance is one of the most vital character qualities a person needs in order to be successful in every avenue of life. In your education, your vocation, and all your relationships – marital, parental, social. You cannot be a quitter and thrive and flourish as God would have you.

"Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and

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determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan Press On! has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."

-Calvin Coolidge

Watch out for pity parties. We often ask the question, "Why me?" Why do we never ask the question, "Why not me?" when the tragedy hits someone else. Remember that the devil is the one who hosts pity parties. Whenever you find yourself entertaining the thought of accepting an invitation to a pity party, remind yourself of who is hosting and throw it away!

*Two frogs fell into a deep cream bowl,
One was an optimistic soul;
But the other took the gloomy view,
"We shall drown," he cried, without more ado.
So with a last despairing cry,
He flung up his legs and said, "Good-bye."
Said the other frog with a merry grim,
"I can't get out, but I won't give in.
I'll just swim round till my strength is spent,
Then will I die the more content."
Bravely he swam till it would seem
His struggles began to churn the cream.
On the top of the butter at last he stopped,
And out of the bowl he gaily hopped.
What of the moral? 'Tis easily found:
If you can't hop out, keep swimming around.*

2. Faith looks up...so you can respond wisely.

James 1:5-8

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. 6 But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by

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the wind. 7 Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.

Trials often have a tendency to perplex us, leaving us in need of wisdom. James states that those who do not ask in faith will not receive what they need from God. Is James suggesting that God gets angry when we experience any doubts and withholds wisdom as punishment for our lack of faith? No, he is communicating the inability of a double-minded man to benefit from God's wisdom.

Faith is needed to follow the Lord's will. Without faith we go back and forth, never confident enough to continue to do things the Lord's way. Following God's will is not always easy. Without faith we will pull back and do things "our way". Some people ask God for wisdom and then, when He gives it, they still decide to do things their own way. As a result they don't receive from God.

3. Faith looks forward...so you can endure.

James 5:7-11

Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. 8 You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Don't grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door! 10 For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy.

Our ultimate hope is not in this life but in what awaits us at the Lord's return. The NT frequently employs military metaphors to describe the life of the Christian in order to communicate the reality that this present life is not conducted on a playground, but a battleground. Paul, James, Peter, and the author of Hebrews all use the hope of our future glory in the presence of Christ as the primary means of

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encouraging Christians to be courageous; to press on; to persevere; to stay strong and not faint. Why? Because every day we are one day closer to our ultimate reward. Trials benefit us by stimulating in us a greater longing for Christ and his return. They remind us that our hope is not in the things of this world but in the future experience of the glory of God's presence.

It is much easier to endure trials and suffering when we believe as Paul did when he wrote,

"...our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

- 2 Corinthians 4:17

The following lyrics are from Jeremy Camp's song "There will be a Day".

I know the journey seems so long
You feel you're walking on your own
But there has never been a step
Where you've walked out all alone

Troubled soul don't lose your heart
Cause joy and peace he brings
And the beauty that's in store
Outweighs the hurt of life's sting

But I hold on to this hope and the promise that He brings
That there will be a place with no more suffering

I can't wait until that day
Where the very one I've lived for always
Will wipe away the sorrow that I've faced

To touch the scars that rescued me
From a life of shame and misery

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Oh, this is why, this is why I sing...

There will be a day with no more tears,
No more pain, and no more fears
There will be a day when the burdens of this place
Will be no more, we'll see Jesus face to face
There will be a day with no more tears,
No more pain, and no more fears
There will be a day when the burdens of this place
Will be no more, we'll see Jesus face to face