

FACING UP TO THE CHALLENGES AND PRAISING GOD

BRO ISAAC IHEKWOABA

Jas 5:10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. v 11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Quotable Quotes

God brings men into deep waters, not to drown them, but to cleanse them.Aughhey

He knows not his own strength that hath not met adversity. Heaven prepares good men with crosses.Johnson

Gold is tried in fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity.Seneca

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THE CHALLENGE OF BRINGING FORTH MINISTRY IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

No matter the pressure, let there be no excuse not to minister to the Lord. In times of tribulation, lack and adversity; stand strong and offer even more service to the Lord. **DO NOT ALLOW ADVERSITY TO CAUSE YOUR HEAD TO BE BOWED DOWN.**

Eph 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

In **Genesis 40** we read the story of Joseph, who in the midst of tribulation, imprisonment, carried on enthusiastically with his ministry of interpreting dreams. Many of us, in such a condition (*imprisoned* for no wrong of ours), would wallow in self pity, how much more to do any thing for any one else. Not so with Joseph: he noticed the sad countenance of Pharaoh's Baker and Butler who had been thrown into prison and reached out to them in ministry:

Ge 40:6 And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad.

v7 And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, wherefore look ye so sadly to day? v8 And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.

Joseph interpreted the dreams without fear, not minding if his action was going to put him in more trouble. **He did not hesitate to do the work of the LORD even though he was facing persecution.** One would have thought that Joseph would have been brooding over his own problems and circumstances, or have the mind set of "I am a Hebrew I will have nothing to do with these Egyptians." One would have thought he would have separated himself and remained in one little corner, crying and whining, looking for pity from those around him. Rather Joseph, not minding his own personal woes, went about happily applying himself, to the ministry of interpretation that God had put in His hands.

Most of us come to the house of the Lord in heaviness of heart. We feel sad, we feel unhappy, because of the challenges we face. At such times we feel people ought to come around us to ask after our welfare; the last thing on our minds is the welfare of others. Brethren the challenges we face, must not be an excuse not to bring forth a ministry unto God. In fact your deliverance, your miracle is tied up to a great degree, to the fact that you are able to break away from the expectations of men and in the face of adversity you begin to do the things the Spirit of God leads you to do. Hear ye the word of the Lord today: **if you are in prison of any kind, if you are in a dungeon, in the midst of the pressure, God is expecting a ministry from you. The pressure must not be an excuse, not to bring forth ministry in the house of God.**

Brace up brethren! There is a ministry that must go forth at this time .It is a ministry that does not look at faces (*God is no respecter of persons. The sons of God must be able to bring forth ministry without looking at faces*). It is a ministry that does not take into account where you come from. It is a ministry that will not handle the work of God deceitfully. It is a ministry that is not pretentious. It is a ministry that shuts out the noise of adversity and brings an offering to the Lord. It is a ministry that stands, in season and out of season; always abounding in the work of the Lord. Whether men approve or not, we should minister and be ready to receive ministry irrespective of the vessels bringing the ministry, as long as the ministry is of Christ.

A point worthy of mention here is the unpretentious way Joseph went about his ministrations. He did not fine tune the interpretation of his dreams, to please the men around him. Most of us would have found it difficult to give such straight forward interpretations, especially when the interpretation was not going to be a pleasant one.

Ge 40: 18 And Joseph answered and said this is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days:

19 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

THE REASON FOR THE TRIBULATIONS:

Some of the tribulations we go through are not necessarily as a result of lack of intelligence or financial lack nor is it as a result of some sin we may have committed. I want to assure you, oh saints of God! it is all in God's plan for our lives. God always has a purpose; He has something He wants to accomplish in our lives. He allows the tribulation and fire to come for a definite and very specific purpose.

Though our tribulation might manifest in physical things like sickness, (*remember Peter's case*) financial lack, trouble in the home or the office. The truth of the matter is that, God has a definite work He wants to do and He allows the tribulation to come to you for that purpose and as soon as we begin to have a different mind set, a different attitude towards the adversity, then we begin to have the victory.

It is not your wicked uncle or Aunt in the village or someone you are contesting land with that is responsible for your woes. Many would draw such a conclusion at the first hint of any trail or challenge. Turn away from ministries or counsels that insinuate such. It is the ministry of the "Bramble". Rather consider the scripture which says that it is with much persecution that we will enter into the kingdom? (*Act 14:22*).

God will allow much persecution to come our way to accomplish the specific purpose He wants to achieve.

God will always show you the glory at the end of the destination, but the rest is for you to experience as you travel down the path. The trials and the persecutions and the hard times, are all part of the plot, for you to get to that glory. When Joseph dreamt the dreams in his fathers house, he must have known clearly that a day of glory was coming for him, but I believe, he may not have realised that he will go down to the dungeon first. Jesus was shown the glory and because He saw the glory, the bible says he was able to endure the cross.

Are we like Jesus willing to endure our cross to experience the glory? Be encouraged to endure the cross brethren, for its all in the package, it is all part of God's program to bring the sons of God to maturity.

Some of us have the erroneous believe that if we have money all our problems will be over. Listen! It is not a function of money. Even the rich man has his own troubles. Whether poor or rich you must overcome to enter. This craze for wealth, success and power should not be our focus at this time. Let us change our mind set. Tribulation is coming. This is the time to learn how to stand firm in God; this is definitely the wrong time to focus on ambitions like "*learning how to make it to the top*" or "*how to earn multiple streams of income*". Tribulation must come, and the purpose has been lined out by God so that He will have SONS.

In the book of Daniel, we see the three Hebrew children refusing to bow in the midst of the fire. They refused to bow to all the pressures that the king and his cohorts were bringing upon them.

Da 3:19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

v20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

Indeed these trials and tribulations are coming from the pit of hell, BUT KNOW THIS BRETHREN YOUR LIVES ARE HID IN CHRIST IN GOD, SO OF NECCESITY GOD HAS ALLOWED THE TRIBULATION TO FULLFIL SOMETHING OF GOD IN YOU. **May this thought comfort you brethren: before any adversity comes, it has to hit God first. In other words, God watches at the gates of our lives. It is only what he allows that will happen.** Remember Job. God knows how much you can take and He always certainly cushions the impact. We often cry "*why me Lord?*" It's got to be you, because there is something in you; there is something in the destiny of God for you that He wants to fulfil. It has been predestined brethren.

Eph 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

It has been there in God even before the foundation of the world. So you must go through it. Prayer will not change it. Remember Jesus prayed didn't he? What he was to go through was ordained before the foundation of the world, so his prayer couldn't change the course of things. Paul had trouble with infirmity. What did God tell him? My grace is sufficient for you to go through it. So in the time of adversity are we expected to just sit down, gritting our teeth, and bearing the burdens. Oh no! We should pray, and what should we pray? 'God cushion the effect on me, help me, let your will not mine be done, show me the way of escape etc.' God will certainly bring comfort, encouragement and grace to stand:

2Co 1:4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

v5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow, they refused to succumb, they were determined that the only one they will worship and bow down to was the most high God.

Da 3:14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

v15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

v16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

v17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

Be strong. Refuse to listen to the taunts of the enemy. Count your blessing and stay encouraged. You may not have money but you are blessed with a wife and children. Look away from the bad side, and turn your heart to God. The enemy's intention is to discourage you from pressing on. He wants you to bow. Let the saints of God be encouraged this morning to be determined, let them set their face like flint.

ATTITUDE IN THE MIDST OF TRIBULATION

Your attitude at this time should be one of rejoicing and praising God. In the midst of the fire, you can praise God, in the midst of the affliction, you can praise, irrespective of the prison walls the enemy surrounds us with, telling us we cannot break loose, we can give God praise. God is expecting that; there will be a people who, by the declaration of their mouths and the attitude of their hearts would be able to break the chains of adversity and give Him praise in times of trouble.

I counsel you if confusion sets in at such a time, don't go about complaining or run around trying this or that to alleviate the problem, rather, sit quiet; **MEDITATE UPON THE GOODNESS OF GOD AND THE LIONS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TOUCH YOU.** Like the three Hebrew children in the book of Daniel, look away from the lions, the adversities and tribulations; and let your mind be upon God.

Isa 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee

The Devil comes and God allows him to throw us where the fire is very hot. In Acts 16 we read of Paul and Silas who were thrown into an inner prison

Ac 16:23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

v24 *Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.*

v25 *And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*

v26 *And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.*

In prison they raised up voices in praise to God. They had a different attitude to tribulation. **The attitude of a son of God is giving praise in the midst of tribulation.** If we can just rise up and refuse to react in the way the devil expects, and rather turn round and begin to bless the name of the Lord in times of trial, the doors of escape and deliverance will begin to open. This is the key to your deliverance. Think it a privilege to suffer for the name of the Lord and bear it patiently. *1Pe 2:20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

POINTS TO NOTE:

Da 3:21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen (a gown), and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Every thing that provided them covering was thrown into the fire.

When tribulation comes it does not necessarily mean you have lost your covering; it is just that your covering has also been cast into the fire. All the anointing will also go into fire. Don't think it is because you have been disobedient. Some may reason "*oh I didn't pay my tithes*". Beloved your tithe also has gone into the fire. You may be tempted to think "*I have done all that is expected surely, there a defence provided for me*". Beloved in this matter of testing; all, including your defence, will go into the fire. You may wonder, God are you no longer with me? **Beloved, God is with you but He is allowing the tribulations so he can accomplish the purpose.**

Da 3:22 Therefore because the King's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

The fire slew the men, but the children of God were left unharmed. This tells us that this spiritual fire is one that protects; it covers, and secures GOD's people. Though the fire will touch you (*i.e the experience may be painful*), the fire does not destroy the covering or the anointing.

Da 3:24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the King was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the King, True, O King.

v25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God

There is good news brother! **Notice the fourth man appears at the height of the tribulation. PRAISE GOD.** The fourth man makes sure that in the midst of the fire no hurt comes to His own. HALLELUJAH. At the height of tribulation we begin to operate on the fourth dimension, you begin to operate at a higher level, the level where you begin to communicate with saints unseen who cheer you along; saying "*you will over come*".

The saints (*the cloud of witnesses. Heb1v1-14*) unseen watch eagerly, for God uses your situation to teach them overcoming. They watch to see how you react, how you act. They are watching to see whether in the midst of the fire you are singing praise or giving thanks or whether you are grumbling or complaining. When we overcome, the overcoming victory is also theirs. You are never alone in the time of tribulation. Let the knowledge that the fourth man is with you encourage you always in the midst of all the uncertainty and fears. GOD BLESS YOU

PAYS TO REMEMBER...

LET IT BE CHRIST

Let it not be you that live today, for what men call life is really death;
as one said in a certain place if the light in me be darkness;
in other words (if the life in me be death) great is that death/darkness.

But let it be Christ Jesus that lives His life in and through us today. He
is our life. Amen!

..... *Yaguo Ide.*