

A Different Perspective
Don't Lose Heart
09-41-4
When Nothing Works Out

Have you ever been in a spot in life where everything you touch seems to fall apart. It's like nothings working at the moment. At work and at home and in every corner of your life, things seem to be falling over and falling apart.

You try this, it doesn't work. You try that, it doesn't work. And it feels like we're being attacked from every quarter. For goodness sake, what is going on? Why is everything falling apart? I don't know, I think we've all been through those seasons in our lives.

Sometimes, with hindsight, we can see the consequences of our bad decisions. But, well, when you're in the thick of it, it's hard to see through that kind of fog. In the middle of it, it's so easy to lose heart. It is. So when we go through those times, well what's it all about?

Not everything we try in life is going to work out. Before I became a Christian I prided myself in being pretty clever and pretty competent and sharp. Built this international consulting firm and you know, most of the time I got things right but sometimes things didn't quite work out so generally I'd blame someone else.

After I became a Christian I looked at my gifts and abilities and started using them for God and listening to Him and following down the paths I thought He was calling me down. But both before and after, there have been times where some things I've tried just didn't work out.

I hired some people, the wrong people. Maybe I embarked on a strategy here or there that wasn't the right one. And then, just when all that's going on, something else in another part of your life also turns to custard.

And you stand back and you scratch your head and you think, 'I haven't been doing anything different, I wonder why this is happening? I mean I'm trying my best. I can't work any harder or I can't do any better. Why is this happening?'

It's so easy to lose heart. You want to throw in the towel. Can I share with you my experience? Looking back on those times, each time that that's happened to me I can look back on it and say, 'you know something, God taught me something through that'. It's

amazing how we learn and grow and mature under adversity. Coal becomes a diamond under immense pressure and heat.

So often we expect that when we step out in faith, 'well, you know, I believe in God and I believe He's calling me, I believe this is His direction.' You know the thing. And then when it turns out to be harder than we think or something doesn't work or it takes longer than we think, we lose heart.

Let's get a revelation. When we step out for God, it's going to be hard. I look back on my last 4 years in the ministry here at Christianityworks and I remember that kind of, you know, epiphany moment when I felt called to leave a pretty cushy consulting career I have to tell you, to become involved here in the ministry.

Yes, God is calling me and yes, He made me to do this stuff and in just two and a half years we've gone from no programs on air on any station to over 400 outlets in 80 countries with millions listening each week. Wow, that's successful!

Well, that's a human perspective. What people don't see is the hard work and the trials and the uncertainty and the pain and the sacrifice that lies under that in being a disciple of Christ.

What is it that whenever we step out in God's direction we think, well it should be easy? Jesus never promised that. In fact, He promised the opposite. He said,

"In this world you will have tribulations."

So now, what I do is when I'm confronting obstacles, when the things that I'm involved in aren't quite working the way I thought they would. When they're causing me pain, none of us like to be there, right? You just never like to be in a situation where maybe someone's lording it over you or it's unfair or it hurts or it just falls over for no reason or something goes bad just because of something totally unrelated and it's not your fault.

When I'm in those places I say, 'okay Lord, what are you trying to teach me today?' Because that's how God teaches us. Everyone whom He loves, He disciplines. In fact, it even says in the New Testament during the days of Jesus' life on the earth

"They offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could have saved Him from death and He was heard because of His reverent submission. Although He was the Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered."

Isn't that amazing? Jesus, the Son of God, the eternal Son who's existed since before time began for all time. In His life on earth He went through tough times and He offered up petitions and loud cries but He was heard, why? Because of His reverent submission. In that garden in Gethsemane, when He was praying there on His own, He said,

"Lord, if this cup of suffering can pass from me let it do but not my will, let your will be done."

And sometimes that happens with us. Sometimes we're going through suffering that we can't understand and we want to flap around and run around and say, 'what's God doing?' And we lose heart. Jesus was heard because of His reverent submission.

"And although He was the Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered."

And again,

"Since we are surrounded by such a great crowd of witnesses let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that's so easily entangles us and let us run with perseverance, the race marked out for us."

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and the perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before Him endured the cross. Scorning at shame and He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured so much opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

If Jesus is the model, it was so brutally unfair that He had to come to this earth to die for you and for me. But He swallowed that. He didn't worry about the shame or the pain or anything else. And here, the writer of this book, Hebrews, is saying, 'look at Jesus who endured so much opposition from sinful men for you and me so that we won't grow weary and lose heart.'

Sometimes, when we go through these things, God is teaching us something about ourselves or maybe we've headed in our own direction or maybe we've ignored Him. Don't be surprised when we run into road blocks and consequences. Maybe God wants to deal with some attitudes of pride or misconceptions that everything that He calls us to do should be easy.

And some days, you know, the devil's having a go. You know what I've noticed, every time there's some breakthrough or something fantastic happens here in the ministry of Christianityworks, the businesses of our board members get attacked left, right and centre. The devil's alive and well.

Do we enjoy this stuff when it's happening? Do you enjoy suffering? Do you enjoy when God takes His pruning shears out and prunes the dead wood off? I don't. We never enjoy that stuff. Do you think Jesus enjoyed being beaten to within an inch of His life and suffering and dying on the cross? No. But He did it. And He did it without complaining and he learned obedience from what He suffered.

Don't lose heart. God is in that place and He's teaching us something. We can't change the past but we can change what we do from here on end. We can say, 'Lord, what are you trying to teach me and how do you want me to respond?'

The quicker we get it, what He's up to, the quicker the pain's going to go away.

"Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary or lose heart."

That's it. That is where the rubber hits the road.