

The Gift of the Struggle

Good Morning Precious Family, and Happy Sunday (Best day of the week: Church, Family, Football, catch-up on reading)! It's NFL Week #1 - GO EAGLES!!!

This past week was filled with reports of several of the good people from our inner-circle going through life-issues, illness, intense Spiritual warfare, etc.

When I attempted to garner sympathy for my own personal struggles, I was met with levity, and told, in response to my impassioned pleas for relief, "good"!

Then, as if that hadn't been righteously audacious enough, I was reminded what a privilege it is to be among the chosen who get to endure the sufferings of Christ, as if that was supposed to make me feel better. The nerve of that Pastor (who's a member of this very inner-circle, and on the Sunday Distribution list :-).

And then I learned a new lesson: what we're experiencing IS the way of salvation! The fact that we're going through these things shows that we are the chosen. It's the very path of life itself we're on when we go through such things. The enemy is highly upset about our Kingdom successes and, although he cannot stop the Lord's progress, he's not going to let us just walk, unimpeded, into our blessings.

So, having been Spiritually re-adjusted by this Divine Chiropractor, I came to understand that we actually get to choose now whether we stay on the right path, the straight & narrow one, knowing it leads to the greatest place/ circumstances imaginable, on earth as well as in Heaven, or whether we get off short of the mark, and accept something much much less than all that's meant for us like most of the rest of the world does. The choice is ours to make, and it is very simple.

As for me, I am ALL-IN. And like I used to say in Law School when I was going through some pretty tough things, "they're going to have to drag me out of this place in order to get me to give-up one stitch of this amazing journey!" It's NOT going to happen, and it didn't!!

I don't know about you, but I am darn thankful to be a child of the living God, darn thankful to be going through some things so that I will, at the other end of this journey, be counted among the followers, not just believers, the followers!!

To Him be all the glory, I am nothing but thankful!!

Much love great people! I pray you all have an amazing week!!

- Jack

Thank you Pastor M. for the Scripture below!

Hebrews 12 (MSG)

Discipline in a Long-Distance Race

¹⁻³ Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!

⁴⁻¹¹ In this all-out match against sin, others have suffered far worse than you, to say nothing of what Jesus went through—all that bloodshed! So don't feel sorry for yourselves. Or have you forgotten how good parents treat children, and that God regards you as his children?

My dear child, don't shrug off God's discipline, but don't be crushed by it either. It's the child he loves that he disciplines; the child he embraces, he also corrects. God is educating you; that's why you must never drop out. He's treating you as dear children. This trouble you're in isn't punishment; it's training, the normal experience of children. Only irresponsible parents leave children to fend for themselves. Would you prefer an irresponsible God? We respect our own parents for training and not spoiling us, so why not embrace God's training so we can truly live? While we were children, our parents did what seemed best to them. But God is doing what is best for us, training us to live God's holy best. At the time, discipline isn't much fun. It always feels like it's going against the grain. Later, of course, it pays off handsomely, for it's the well-trained who find themselves mature in their relationship with God.

¹²⁻¹³ So don't sit around on your hands! No more dragging your feet! Clear the path for long-distance runners so no one will trip and fall, so no one will step in a hole and sprain an ankle. Help each other out. And run for it!

¹⁴⁻¹⁷ Work at getting along with each other and with God. Otherwise you'll never get so much as a glimpse of God. Make sure no one gets left out of God's generosity. Keep a sharp eye out for weeds of bitter discontent. A thistle or two gone to seed can ruin a whole garden in no time. Watch out for the Esau syndrome: trading away God's lifelong gift in order to satisfy a short-term appetite. You well know how Esau later regretted that impulsive act and wanted God's blessing—but by then it was too late, tears or no tears.

An Unshakable Kingdom

¹⁸⁻²¹ Unlike your ancestors, you didn't come to Mount Sinai—all that volcanic blaze and earthshaking rumble—to hear God speak. The earsplitting words and soul-shaking message terrified them and they begged him to stop. When they heard the words—"If an animal touches the Mountain, it's as good as dead"—they were afraid to move. Even Moses was terrified.

²²⁻²⁴ No, that's not your experience at all. You've come to Mount Zion, the city where the living God resides. The invisible Jerusalem is populated by throngs of festive angels and Christian citizens. It is the city where God is Judge, with judgments that make us just. You've come to Jesus, who presents us with a new covenant, a fresh charter from God. He is the Mediator of this covenant. The murder of Jesus, unlike Abel's—a homicide that cried out for vengeance—became a proclamation of grace.

²⁵⁻²⁷ So don't turn a deaf ear to these gracious words. If those who ignored earthly warnings didn't get away with it, what will happen to us if we turn our backs on heavenly warnings? His voice that time

shook the earth to its foundations; this time—he's told us this quite plainly—he'll also rock the heavens: "One last shaking, from top to bottom, stem to stern." The phrase "one last shaking" means a thorough housecleaning, getting rid of all the historical and religious junk so that the unshakable essentials stand clear and uncluttered.

²⁸⁻²⁹ Do you see what we've got? An unshakable kingdom! And do you see how thankful we must be? Not only thankful, but brimming with worship, deeply reverent before God. For God is not an indifferent bystander. He's actively cleaning house, torching all that needs to burn, and he won't quit until it's all cleansed. God himself is Fire!