

## Facing Trouble and Hardship

Every person faces difficult circumstances in their lives. Sometimes the troubles are brought on by ourselves and other times they are not. Either way, how we react to trouble and hardship in our lives is more important than the difficult times themselves. In difficult times we will either turn from Jesus or turn to Jesus. Our faith will either increase or decrease. It is important how we react to troubles in our lives.

Jesus said in John 16:33

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Jesus knew that our life would not always be easy. He wants us to have peace when we face difficult times and know that he has overcome the world. This peace is unlike anything else you can experience. This is a peace that wells up in your heart and allows you to be at ease with whatever situation you or trouble you face. This peace drowns out all the noise of the world and all the anxiety that comes from the world.

Let's read Matthew 8:23-27

Matthew 8:23-27 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. (24) Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. (25) The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" (26) He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. (27) The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

Jesus has already claimed victory over your situation just as he did for the disciples as they crossed the sea. He has spoken peace in the midst of your trouble and hardship just as he silenced the wind and stilled the waves. It is up to you to receive his peace and his victory in your life.

The Apostle Paul was faced with several troubles and hardships throughout his ministry. Not only was he not trusted by Christians when he first gave his heart to Jesus, but many people tried to kill him because they did not want to believe his message.

Each time life got difficult for Paul, he had to decide to turn his back on Jesus or draw closer to Jesus. He needed to decide to give in and walk away defeated or stand up in the face of his trouble.

After Paul decided to follow Jesus, he was excited to tell his fellow Pharisees and church leaders how Jesus had changed his life. However, they did not want to listen to him. Not only did the leaders not trust him but the Christians were hesitant to trust him too. Paul was on his way to Damascus to arrest and put Christians in jail but instead, he shows up and testifies that Jesus is the son of God.

Acts 9:20-25

Acts 9:20-25 At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. (21) All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among



those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" (22) Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah. (23) After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, (24) but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. (25) But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

Paul did not back down when trouble and hardship came into his life. People were hesitant to believe that this was the same man set out to destroy Christians and yet he was preaching a message about love. People probably whispered and pointed as he spoke in the synagogue if they were brave enough to be around him.

We can learn 3 things from Paul that we can apply to our lives when we face difficult times.

1. Paul became more powerful as he preached the name of Jesus
2. Paul was not alone
3. Paul knew when to act

First, Paul became more powerful as he preached the name of Jesus.

- There is power in the name of Jesus.
  - Philippians 2:10-11 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (11) and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- He didn't allow people's accusations and lack of acceptance of him keep him from preaching the truth.
- The message of Jesus was more important than his reputation and who the people thought he was.
- Paul was more concerned about the hearts of the people around him and where they would spend eternity than his own popularity.
- The Bible says that as he continued to preach he grew more powerful. The Holy Spirit worked mightily in his life in spite of his circumstance.

The second thing we can learn from Paul is he was not alone

- After several days Paul learned of a plot the Jews had to kill him.
  - Acts 23:12-22 The next morning some Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. (13) More than forty men were involved in this plot. (14) They went to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. (15) Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here." (16) But when the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul. (17) Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him." (18) So he took him to the commander. The centurion said, "Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and



asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you." (19) The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?" (20) He said: "Some Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. (21) Don't give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request." (22) The commander dismissed the young man with this warning: "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me."

- He surrounded himself with people who believed in him and were willing to help him.
- Paul's friends would help him escape when the time was right.
- Often times when we are going through difficult times we tend to not want help from anyone. We do not want people to know about our hardships.
- God made us to have relationships with others. He never wanted us to go through life alone.
- Proverbs tells us that a true friend is someone who sticks closer than a brother.
- It is important that we have people in our lives who will pray for us, encourage us, and stand by our side when life is hard.

The third thing we learn from Paul is he knew when to act

- Eventually, it was time for Paul to leave Damascus, the place where he preached the Gospel for the first time.
- Damascus was a place of excitement, where Paul first experienced the power of Jesus Christ.
- Damascus was also a place of persecution and disappointment. Where Paul was not trusted and was hated.
- Paul's friends helped him escape. He left at night in a basket through the opening of the city wall.
- We must know when and how to act when we face troubles and hardships. Sometimes we must weather the storm and stay in the midst of the difficult times.
- Other times Jesus wants us to act by doing or saying something to change the situation.
- There are also times when Jesus provides a way out just as he did for Paul.

In our times of trouble, we must speak the name of Jesus, lean on those close to us, and know when to act.

