

# The Difficult Truth about Difficulties!

## Part 1

### INTRODUCTION:

- As of recent, we have had to endure through the death of some of our church Members, 5-as a matter of fact:
- That is a lot for any Church to have to go through!
- Add to that for Sister Kelley and I, 2-Women that we previously Pastored, Herlinda Hernandez and her Daughter, Marta Zamora.....And of course, Kevin Lowe, Sister Kelley's Brother!
  - I will not kid you, this has been an **EXTREMELY** heavy load to bear!
- As Shepherds, Sister Kelley and I have always tried to Lead by "**MODELING.**"
  - To "model" the "**HOW-TO'S**" of dealing with things and getting through them, in continued Victory and Peace!
  - So, to that end, that is what this Message today is dedicated to!
- I especially am **CHALLENGING** those who are in ministry or preparing for ministry, to pay **VERY CLOSE ATTENTION** to the Biblical Principles will be laying out here today!
- This will be more of a "**TEACHING**" message, presented in a **TOPICAL** manner!
- Today, as the Spiritual Shepherd of this Church, I am going to equip you in this message today as to:
  - How to Biblically understand what we are going through!
  - How to maintain your peace in the midst of the storms of life!
  - How to get-through difficult times and maintain your Victory!
  - How to recognize Biblical errors in regards to when the flood of opposition and difficulties come crashing down upon you!
  - What the Bible teaches about difficulties, struggles, trials, and persecution!
  - And finally, how to process all of this in a manner that is both pleasing and glorifying to the Lord Jesus Christ!

**TRANSITION:**

So, buckle-up and take notes!.....**LET'S GET STARTED!**

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**TEXT:** 2 Corinthians 4:8-18 NLT.

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. <sup>9</sup> We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. <sup>10</sup> Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

<sup>11</sup> Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. <sup>12</sup> So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you.

<sup>13</sup> But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, "I believed in God, so I spoke."<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>14</sup> We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, <sup>[b]</sup> will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you. <sup>15</sup> All of this is for your benefit. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.

<sup>16</sup> That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are <sup>[c]</sup> being renewed every day. <sup>17</sup> For 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! <sup>18</sup> So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

**~~~AND NOW FROM THE MESSAGE TRANSLATION~~~**

**2 Corinthians 4:8-18**

**The Message**

<sup>7-12</sup> If you only look at *us*, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us. As it is, there's not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we're not much to look at. We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken. What they did to Jesus, they do to us—trial and torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, he does in us—he lives! Our lives are at constant risk for Jesus' sake, which makes Jesus' life all the more evident in us. While we're going through the worst, you're getting in on the best!

<sup>13-15</sup> We're not keeping this quiet, not on your life. Just like the psalmist who wrote, "I believed it, so I said it," we say what we believe. And what we believe is that the One who raised up the Master Jesus will just as certainly raise us up with you, alive. Every detail works to your advantage and to God's glory: more and more grace, more and more people, more and more praise!

<sup>16-18</sup> So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace. These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever.

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I. **PRINCIPLE #1---*In This World, Even as Followers of Jesus, We will Have Difficulties!***

a. **JESUS SAID IN JOHN 16:33--- *"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world!"***

b. **SUPPORTIVE SCRIPTURES:**

**Romans 8:18-25 NLT.**

*<sup>18</sup> Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. <sup>19</sup> For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. <sup>20</sup> Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, <sup>21</sup> the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. <sup>22</sup> For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. <sup>24</sup> We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. <sup>25</sup> But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)*

c. There is a "**TENSION**" That Exists Between our Dual-Citizenship!

i. We are citizens of this world, but we are also citizens of Heaven!

- ii. The Bible refers to us in terms as “**Strangers, Pilgrims, Foreigners, and Nomads**” in this world, because of our New Nature in Christ Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit!

**SCRIPTURE:**

Hebrews 11:13-16 NLT.

*<sup>13</sup> All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. <sup>14</sup> Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. <sup>15</sup> If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. <sup>16</sup> But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

John 17:14-18 NIV.

*<sup>14</sup> I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. <sup>15</sup> My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.*

- d. But while we are citizens of Heaven, we still **LIVE** here in this Fallen World to Minister, and while we do, we experience the “**EFFECTS**” of the **FALL** that it has had on this life!
  - i. Sickness
  - ii. Disease
  - iii. Sin
  - iv. And, Death

**II. PRINCIPLE #2---*The Presence of Difficulties, Struggles, Hardships, and Tribulation; Does Not Mean there is Sin in the Camp!***

- a. Christians can sometimes misapply this idea from the story of the sin of Achan in Joshua chapter 7.

*“According to the narrative of Joshua chapter 7, Achan pillaged an ingot of gold, a quantity of silver, and a “beautiful Babylonian garment” from Jericho, in contravention of Joshua's directive that “all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: **they shall come into the treasury ...”***

- i. As a result, punishment fell upon the whole group of Israelites as the result of this man’s sin, and the punishment was not stopped until the man and his sin were exposed and repented of!
- b. Now while the Bible **DOES** teach that sin does have a penalty associated with it, that can bring about its own **DIFFICULTIES** and **PERSECUTIONS**, .....For Romans 6:23 declares: **“The wages of sin is DEATH!”**
- c. **HOWEVER**, that DOES **NOT** mean that the presence of these TRIALS, DIFFICULTIES, or STRUGGLES is a sign from God that the People of God are doing something SINFUL or WRONG,.....The exact OPPOSITE can be the TRUTH, .....**IT’S BECAUSE THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT!**
- d. Not **“EVERY”** instance of Difficulty and Persecution; Struggles and Trials; are indicators that there is **SIN IN THE CAMP**.....and God must be punishing the People in that Camp!

- i. This was the narrative that Jesus had to correct with His Disciples in

**John 9:1-5**

*“As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> “Rabbi,” his disciples asked him, “why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?” <sup>3</sup> “It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. <sup>4</sup> We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work. <sup>5</sup> But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world.”*

**III. PRINCIPLE #3---Suffering is the **“FORGOTTEN”** Element of Discipleship!**

- a. Because we are Americans, we **DO NOT** think in terms of **SUFFERING** and **PERSECUTION!**.....yet!
  - i. This is an element of the Christian’s Life that we have conveniently either overlooked→As in.....”**Out of Sight, Out of Mind!**”
  - ii. Or, because we have enjoyed the **FREEDOM** of our Faith here in America, it has not been taught very much from the Pulpits in America!

- b. **BUT**,.....The Word of God paints an entirely different **TRUTH** and **REALITY** for **ALL** Followers of Jesus!

- i. **SUPPORTIVE SCRIPTURES:**

**Matthew 10:16-22 NLT.**

**2 Timothy 4:5 NLT.**

**Romans 8:15-17 NLT.**

**2 Corinthians 1:3-7 NLT.**

**2 Timothy 2:3-13 NLT.**

**IV. PRINCIPLE #4---*Crosses are Meant for Persecution and Death!***

- a. Yet, Jesus Himself instructed us that if we are going to be His Followers, we **MUST** Daily take up our Crosses in order to Follow Him!
  - i. Which means that Following and Serving Jesus, **MIGHT** cost us are very life!
    - 1. And **SOME** are **NOT** willing to pay that kind of price, and will be part of the "Falling-Away!"

**SCRIPTURE:**

**Luke 9:23-26 NLT.**

*<sup>23</sup> Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. <sup>24</sup> If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. <sup>25</sup> And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? <sup>26</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my message, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in his glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels.*

- b. **BUT, YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND THIS**,..... Crosses are instruments of persecution and death!

i. And where do we carry our “Daily-Cross” to?.....The same place that Jesus did,.....**TO GOLGOTHA TO DIE!**

1. This is **NOT** a very popular and often offensive reality of the “**PRICE-TAG**” to being a Follower of Jesus, that MANY American Christian’s simply have either **NOT** heard or have dismissed, because of the **FREEDOMS** we have so enjoyed!

ii. **SUPPORTIVE SCRIPTURE:**

Matthew 10:28-39 NLT.