

TURNING
BATTLES
INTO

VICTORY



Peter Doseck

TURNING BATTLES INTO VICTORY

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CHAPTER ONE WHAT IS TRIBULATION?

We live in a complicated world. Technology changes rapidly, seemingly from one day to the next. Computer upgrades that meant something yesterday will mean nothing tomorrow. Systems that worked last week may not work next week. Because things change so often, some people have decided to "check out" and give up on staying current with the technological world around them.

This might be possible when dealing with natural things, but when it comes to spiritual matters, if you don't understand how things operate you will be confused and vulnerable to attack. For instance, if you cannot attribute that which is evil to evil, you will blame a righteous God for unrighteous acts, and you will turn from Him, instead of to Him, in a crisis.

Sometimes Christians fail to attribute blame justly. They cry out to God and ask, "Why?", when what they should do is find the source of the trouble and deal with it forcefully. It is imperative for us to understand why bad things happen in life so that our words, judgments, and reactions are in line with what God says about our situations.

Deuteronomy 4:23-31 says: "Take heed unto yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which He made with you, and make you a

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graven image, or the likeness of anything, which the Lord your God has forbidden you. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

"When you shall bear children, and children's children, and you shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of anything, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord your God, to provoke Him to anger: I call Heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto you go over Jordan to possess it; you shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

"And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and you shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you. And there you shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

"But if from thence you shall seek the Lord your God, you shall find Him, if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in tribulation, and all these things are come upon you, even in the latter days, if you turn to the Lord your God, and shall be obedient unto His voice; (for the Lord your God is a merciful God;) He will not forsake you, neither destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore unto them."

Notice the word tribulation in this passage. Clearly, tribulation was promised to anyone who would forsake God and turn to worship idols. God would not cause the trouble, but He would not stop it

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either because He is just, and He watches over all of His Word to perform it, even the parts we don't like.

The good news is that even though the children of Israel were promised tribulation for turning away from the truth, God revealed a way out for those who would turn back to Him with all their heart and all their soul. God always has a way out, no matter the cause of our trouble.

Tribulation Defined

So what is tribulation? Is it the result of our own sin and mistakes, as it was in Deuteronomy? Is it the result of an attack by the devil? Is it the work of other people? Or is it the effect of the world in which we live? The answer is, "Yes", to all of these.

The word tribulation is synonymous with trials, persecution, hardship, and suffering. It can be any kind of adversity, trouble, distress, affliction, sorrow, or pressure. It may feel as if you are under siege by an enemy, and in reality, you are. Tribulation can cause you to be bound, vexed, and oppressed.

Tribulation can be like a fire that is ignited with a torch, violently hot and consuming everything around you in an instant. It can also be a long lasting attack upon your life that goes on for months or even years at a time. Long-term tribulation can result in bitter bondage and imprisonment with seemingly no way out.

Romans 8:35 says: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or

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sword?”

Tribulation is a weapon whose sole purpose is to separate you from the love of Christ. It is the enemy of the believer, not a friend. Tribulation is meant to destroy your faith, shake your foundation, cause offense, bring about discouragement, and produce devastating hopelessness.

Tribulation is unleashed in your life from many sources, but the ultimate purpose is to get you to give up and quit. Problems arise, not just to mess with your family, but to mess with your destiny. Trouble comes, not just to take your health or your wealth, but to take your faith. There is a diabolical purpose behind tribulation, which is why you must keep your eyes focused on the things you cannot see, rather than on the things you can see.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 says: “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Tribulation is that which is seen, felt, and experienced in the natural. Tribulation is temporal, meaning it will pass, but God's promises are eternal, and they will never fail, no matter how difficult the battle. You must keep your eyes on the eternal Word of God, instead of on the temporary circumstances that vex you today.

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Does God Bring Tribulation?

In a phrase, tribulation is "oppression from a foe." Now, let me ask you, is God your foe? Is He your enemy? Of course not. God is not the author of tribulation. He does not send bad things into your life to "teach you something." The devil may bring them on you, or you may bring them on yourself, but even then, God is ready to deliver you from them all.

No matter what, you must remember that tribulation never comes from God. Get it settled in your mind right now that God is not the author of tribulation. If He was, He would be opposed to Himself as the author and finisher of your faith. Tribulation is the mortal enemy of faith, so the author of faith and the author of tribulation cannot be one and the same.

Ask yourself this. Am I vexed? Am I troubled? Am I being harassed? Am I under siege? Am I incapacitated by pressure? These things are not from God. Just resolve it right now, and accept that none of it is from Him.

Too often when hardships come, questions about God's faithfulness soon follow. Instead of asking, "Why?", we need to examine what is happening to us and discover where the trouble came from. No matter the source, tribulation is never from God.

God wants you to be like Him. He wants you to live morally, soundly, by faith, and in abundance and health, all the while appropriating the rights and privileges of a son or a daughter of God. This is a great outcome, but you must know that if you live

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this way, the devil will show up on your doorstep, and he will throw everything at you to try to get you to turn away from your faith and quit.

This is not to scare you, but to inform you so that you will not be surprised when trouble comes. 1 Peter 4:12 says: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.”

It should be no surprise when tribulation comes. The same fiery trials that come to you are coming to all who live godly in Christ Jesus. They are common to all believers who live by faith because the devil is our chief adversary, and he goes around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour by instigating troubles of every kind. He hates us all, and he is determined to make us surrender our faith.

We must clearly define and understand who God is and who the adversary is. To do this we have to understand the things that God will do, and the things the devil will do. This will allow you to use your faith toward God and against the enemy.

Above all, you must be convinced of God's goodness and of the devil's evil nature. You cannot walk through life in a mashed potato haze where everything becomes lumped together in one big glob. You must define what is from God and what is from the devil, from your own mistakes, from other people, or from the world around you.

Ultimately, God is good. This is the righteous side of the equation. On the trouble-making side you have the devil who is evil, your own mistakes, the world system which is set against you, and other people

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whose hearts are far from God. It sounds like the deck is stacked against you, but all you really need to remember is that God is the only one who never, ever causes tribulation. You may cause it, others may cause it around you, and the devil may cause it, but God is always innocent.

James 1:17 sums it up when it says: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

God is not a mystery, doing good one day and evil the next. EVERY good gift is from above, which means every evil "gift" is from below. Who dwells below? We do. The devil does. People do. And the world system does. Tribulation comes from the latter four, but it NEVER comes from God.

A dark room is not a lit room. Dark is dark, and light is light. As soon as light hits the dark, no matter how dim, it is not dark anymore. If God is the author of a situation, it will be light, but if darkness is all around you, then God is not at fault. And the best part is, when God who is light enters a situation, darkness will no longer prevail. As soon as God comes, light comes, and darkness ceases to be.

If you know who your adversary is, you can withstand him. But if you believe God is your problem, what can you do? Paul said, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air." (See 1 Corinthians 9:26.) Paul knew his enemy. He did not waste valuable energy trying to fight some phantom foe. He targeted his punches toward the source of the problem, and we need to do

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the same.

The Source of Tribulation

Tribulation comes from the four main sources we have identified already. It comes from us, from the world system, from other people, and of course from the devil. Let's look at each one carefully.

Unfortunately, the cause of trouble is too often the one who looks back at you in the mirror. You can be your own worst enemy because you have opened the door to the devil, not necessarily by the things you have done, but often by the things you have failed to do. James 4:17 says: "Therefore to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin." I am convinced there are more sins of omission in the body of Christ than there are sins of commission.

Here's an example. The devil might tempt a godly man with fornication, but he would never give in to it. He would fiercely avoid the sin of commission, but then he might turn around and refuse to get up early in the morning to worship God when things are going wrong in his life. By doing so, he would fall into the sin of omission.

Why do Christians fail to call upon the Lord in their time of trouble? Why do they forget to give cheerfully when needs arise? Why do they withhold their forgiveness when Jesus freely forgave them? Many believers wonder why life is so messed up, but it may be because they are not doing what they know to do, and this has opened the door to the devil.

The second place tribulation comes from is the

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world in which we live. In John 16:33, Jesus said: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

The world is made of three foundations, just as the kingdom of God is made of three foundations. The three foundations of the Kingdom are faith, hope, and love (see 1 Corinthians 13:13). The three foundations of the world are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (see 1 John 2:15-16).

Conflicts arise when the lust of the flesh takes hold in a mind. “I want that car now” is nothing more than the lust of the flesh pushing against your good sense. If you give into it, you’ll end up with a car payment you can’t make, a budget squeezed until you can’t breathe, and an angry wife.

You’ll say, “Woe is me”, but you should say, “Dumb is me” and recognize your weakness. Eliminate the trouble by putting down the lust of the flesh and saving until you can afford the car. In this case it’s not the devil, and it’s not other people, but it is you giving in to the world’s way of thinking.

You need to resist the lust of the eyes, too. You do this by leaving the credit card in your pocket, by keeping your eyes on your own wife, and by avoiding jealousy over what your neighbor has. All of these will get you into serious trouble if you let them run rampant in your life.

You also need to turn from the pride of life and do what the Bible says in every situation. Men should

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love their wives as the Bible commands, even when they push their buttons. Wives need to respect and speak well of their husbands, even when they fail to take out the trash. Don't let the three foundations of evil in the world create tribulation in your life.

The third source of tribulation is other people. God created us to live in families, and as a part of churches and communities. This is great when things are going well, but when people turn on us, vex us, and otherwise work against us, it can be very difficult.

Family members can cause tribulation in a million ways. Rebellious teenagers, angry husbands, demanding wives, controlling mothers-in-law - any one of these can make you want to climb in a car and keep on driving to the ends of the earth. But guess what? You're related to them, and you have a responsibility to live peaceably among them.

People in your family may vex you a thousand times a day, but this is no excuse to give up on living by faith. They may push your buttons until you think you can't take it anymore, but it is your job to pray for them, forgive them, love them, and be patient with them.

And then there are friends, church members, co-workers, and others in the community who make life difficult for you. You don't have to accept outright abuse, but Jesus did tell you that you must forgive, even if it is up to 7 x 70 opportunities a day. That doesn't leave much wiggle room.

We will be dealing with people for eternity, so we might as well come to terms with the fact that they will mess with our perfect world on earth, but when

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we get to Heaven we will finally get it right and live together in unity. Hang in there! Jesus is coming!

Of course we know the devil is the primary source of tribulation. No matter if we open the door to his works or if he comes to the battle through some other avenue, the devil always comes to steal, kill, and destroy. The good news is, God has his number. Psalm 34:19 says: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”

Notice it does not say some, but all. Even though you are in the middle of a great confrontation, God is on your side. He’s not opposing you or withholding anything from you. He’s not trying to hide from you, and He’s not trying to teach you something. He only wants you to taste and see that the Lord is good.

The devil will fight you tooth and nail, sending whatever storm he can to knock you out of the boat. He will cause false accusations, misunderstandings, offense, persecution, lack, sickness, and disease. He will oppress and oppose you on every level, but thank God we know his end, as well as our own. The devil loses, and we win!

The devil may even stir up trouble when you are doing things right, like standing on the Word for instance. Mark 4:16-17 says: “These are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the Word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution arises for the Word's sake, immediately they are offended.”

The devil will not roll over just because you heard

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a promise from the Holy Ghost, decided to believe it, and have spent one day walking by faith. The devil will resist you every step of the way, which means you will have to draw a line in the sand if you want to make it to victory.

You will have to fight the good fight of faith and finish your course; otherwise, you will give in to the pressure of tribulation, and you will be knocked back to the beginning again and again. Eventually, you've got to stand up and be steadfast long enough to win.

Don't worry about the attacks of the devil. The Bible says he is "as a roaring lion." It doesn't say he has any teeth! Let him roar and paw at the ground. Let him stir up dust and make a racket all around you. God is with you, and that's all you need!

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CHAPTER TWO THE BATTLE IS ON!

In every tribulation and every distress, at every place of pressure and vexation, in every siege and every battle, God is there. If you will handle tribulation the way that God wants you to, it will not be a point of destruction, but it will become a place where you will encounter the fullness of who He is. In other words, you may find out who God is in a pinch in a way you would never discover Him otherwise.

If you did not fight against sickness and disease, you would not know that God is a healing God. If you never struggled with financial needs that are beyond your capacity, you would not discover that God is Jehovah Jireh, your provider. In the secret place of every struggle there is a revelation of God waiting to be unveiled.

Daniel did not know that God could shut a lion's mouth until he sat in the den all night. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not know there was such a thing as indestructible flesh until they stood in the midst of a fiery furnace with one whose countenance was as the Son of God.

In the midst of tribulation, though it is filled with evil and its plan is to destroy you, there is a God who is standing right beside you. He is waiting to show Himself strong in a way that you have never

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experienced before.

This is why tribulation should never lead to moaning and groaning. When trouble comes, don't give in to the temptation to complain, but realize there is a discovery to be made, and there is a victory to be acquired. Whatever the devil brings into your life, whatever problem you cause yourself, or whatever men or the world throw at you, God will turn it around for your good, if you will handle it right.

Romans 8:28 says: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Handle things God's way, and He will reveal Himself in a supernatural way to deliver you from your trouble.

When tribulation comes, you must rise up and know that no matter how hot the battle gets, God is with you, and you are not alone. You may go through the fire, but you won't be burned, and you won't even smell like smoke; you may go through the storm, but your boat won't sink, and you will arrive to the shores of deliverance on the other side ... as long as you never give up, never back down, and never, ever quit.

Is Tribulation a Must?

1 Thessalonians 3:4 says: "For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and you know." Here it appears that Paul prophesied tribulation would come to him. Why would he do that? Perhaps because he had read Psalm 34:19 which

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says: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all."

The word "many" means more than you can count, not just one or two. Many afflictions will come because the righteous are the light of the world, the possessors of faith, and the anchors of hope. The devil hates us because our light exposes his darkness. He knows the only way he can put out the light of the gospel is to destroy the messengers who bring it forth; therefore, he sends trials, troubles, and tribulation of every kind to get you to be quiet and stay home.

Trouble comes to derail your faith, unhinge your hope, and steal your light. It comes with the evil purpose of destroying your witness so that you will no longer tell the world about Jesus, but will instead focus your attention on your own trouble. Don't let the devil win this way!

2 Timothy 3:12 says: "Yes, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Again, persecution seems like a promise. I believe this is why there is so much compromise in the kingdom of God. It's much easier to bow to pressure than it is to stand up for righteousness, but we cannot allow ourselves to give in so easily.

If you are going to stand up for righteousness, you must know that your righteous light will be persecuted by the world's evil darkness. Jesus said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." (See John 15:22)

No one wants to be shown that they are doing wrong, but everyone wants an appeased conscience

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that tells them they are acceptable to God. When we live righteous lives we reflect what is right, and we expose what is wrong. This puts us in the crosshairs of humanity. If we are right, and they are wrong, we must be silenced so that their sin can be cloaked in darkness again.

This is why in the midst of hard times we must be willing to stand up and let our light shine, even though it will cost us more tribulation, more persecution, more rejection, and more trouble.

We should never surround ourselves with only those who accept us, but we should surround ourselves with people who need to hear from us. Anyone can live righteously in the midst of those who understand and accept them, but it takes real faith to live your convictions in the midst of a condemning, reviling, and derogatory world.

Undercover Christianity is wrong! "Let your light so shine before all men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven." (See Matthew 5:16)

Tribulation should not deter us. Many may be the afflictions of the righteous, but on the flip side many will be the discoveries of God in dimensions we have never known before. In the middle of the storm we will find He is our boat floater. In the middle of a fiery furnace we will discover He is our asbestos shield. In the middle of a lion's den we will find He is our lion tamer.

To bring it closer to home, if you never got hungry, you would never know the satisfaction of a good meal. If you never got tired, you would never

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discover the relief of a good night's sleep. In the same way, if you were never afflicted, you would never know the wonder of deliverance at the hand of your God.

You don't need to invite tribulation into your life by living ungodly, but you also don't need to fear it. Endure trouble for a season, as you endure hunger for a moment, knowing a good, home-cooked, lip-smacking meal is on the way. Deliverance is coming! Stand strong!

Bound to a Purpose

Acts 20:22-23 says: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me."

Paul was bound to his purpose. He was bound to a calling and a cause, no matter what came his way. Many Christians today think they are not like Paul. They don't know their purpose, and they can't see a call on their lives or a cause worth fighting for.

I am here to tell you that you do have a purpose, which is to live godly in the midst of an ungodly world. You do have a call to be Christ-like and to serve people. You do have a righteous cause to fight for.

It doesn't matter if you're not a five-fold evangelist reaching the world, you are still doing the work of an evangelist in your own sphere of influence. You are spreading the gospel and serving people, and you are

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bound to a higher calling.

Don't think that your purpose is less valuable than that of someone else. Don't think that what you do is non-essential or unimportant. What you do will make a big difference, even though it may seem small in your eyes.

A cup of water may be the difference between someone crossing the finish line or failing. What if you don't carry the water? What if you sit down on the sidelines because you think being a water-bearer has no significance? It only takes one small kindness to encourage someone and help them make it through. Sometimes the little things are the things that really make the difference.

Paul knew that bonds and afflictions were waiting for him everywhere he went. This should tell you that in your future there will be trouble. There will be plenty of problems, but God will always be with you, ready to deliver you from them all. The Holy Ghost knows about your problems before you encounter them, so you can relax, knowing there is an answer in every situation.

Paul went on to say in Acts 20:24, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Paul knew that one day he would come to the end of his life. He knew he would die in the middle of a fight of faith, and he wanted to be sure he had done all he could for the sake of the gospel.

People around Paul may have wondered why so

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many bad things happened to a man in the ministry, a man of faith and power. They may have questioned how he could say he was in the heart of God's will while living in a prison.

There will be times when you will be in the center of God's will, but trouble will arise anyway, and things will be hotter than they've ever been. The devil may mount an assault against you that you will know you cannot survive. If you will handle it rightly, though, at the end of the battle there will be a crown awaiting you.

Our tomorrows may be filled with tribulation which will try to knock us out of the arena of faith, but we must remember that none of the things that afflicted Paul moved him, and none of the things we face should ever move us. Tribulation, problems, hardships, financial struggles, rebellious children, misunderstanding spouses, unruly in-laws, persecution, sickness, and disease are all appointed to take you down, but they do not have to prevail.

When we face troubles, we must learn in the midst of them and become stronger to face the next set of problems. Tribulation may come to move us, but when things get tough we must move trouble out of our way and not allow it to move us off of our single-purposed, eternity-focused, God-given path.

Good Soldiers

2 Timothy 2:3 says: "You therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." We are in a conflict. It is not a conflict of comparisons, such

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as who has the biggest and the best, and it's not about who is the most prosperous, or who is the healthiest and happiest. We are all soldiers of the cross, and we will all encounter trouble in life. We must endure hardness as good soldiers do.

We are not living in a rose garden. We live in the fields of life filled with attacks from the adversary who opposes everything about the message of the cross. We live our lives rubbing shoulders with people who dislike us, people who need a touch from Heaven, and people who hate God with every ounce of their being. We encounter people who despise our moral standards, who refuse to accept right and wrong, and who reject the character and integrity the gospel requires of us.

No matter what, we have to endure hardness as good soldiers. We cannot complain and give up just because the pressure is on.

What would you think of a soldier who ran at the first shot in a battle? The word coward comes to mind. We expect the men and women of our military to be well-trained, focused, diligent, reliable, hard-working, and most of all brave. Why do we not expect the same things from ourselves as soldiers of the cross?

Our training comes from time spent in the Word, prayer, and worship, time spent fellowshiping with the Holy Ghost, time spent with others of like faith, iron sharpening iron, and time spent meditating on who God is and what He has done for us.

This is all well and good, just as basic training is good for a soldier, but none of it matters until we face

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adversity and the first shot of the battle rings out right next to us. This is when we discover who we are. Are we really saved? Do we really believe? Do we really trust God and His Word? You won't know until the battle begins.

2 Timothy 2:4 goes on to say: “No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who has chosen him to be a soldier.”

God chose you to be a soldier. Think of that. This is not a volunteer army, but you were selected by the Most High God, the Supreme Commander in Chief. He chose you because He knows you have what it takes to prevail in battle. He knows you can stand up and fight even when the pressure is the most intense.

God called you to be a soldier because He knows what He placed in you when you were born again. He knows what you possess as a son or a daughter of God. He knows that you have what it takes to overcome anything and everything the devil throws your way.

2 Timothy 2:12 continues: “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us.” Suffering tribulation is a part of the Christian walk, just as fighting in war is a part of the life of a soldier. They fight, and we fight. We must fight the good fight of faith, stand up, and endure to the end.

Our attitude when we fight matters, too. James 1:2-4 says: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and

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entire, wanting nothing.”

This is not a cliché, but a command. We must count it all joy when trouble comes knocking at our door, going so far as to be happy that the devil is attacking us, because it is a good indication that we are doing something right, and the devil is afraid of us.

To me, tribulation is like a token or a badge of honor. When we are in tribulation we know that the devil has been awakened from his slumber, and he has set something in motion against us because he sees the things we are doing will make an eternal impact.

We must stand strong and allow our fight of faith against tribulation to call up reserves of patience, reinforcements of endurance, and reservoirs of strength to help us prevail on the battlefield.

Ours should never be a passive fight, but we must actively proclaim the Word of God and live faithfully until we reach the victory. Let's not be afraid of tribulation, persecution, trouble, trials, or distress. Let's not back down from a good fight, but let's exercise our faith, endure like good soldiers, and allow God to fight our battles for us, through us, and in us for His glory.

Always Triumphant

2 Corinthians 2:14 says: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place." Always means all the time,

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without exception, under all circumstances, and with no restrictions.

There is never a time when you have to fail. There is never a time when you must give up due to lack of power. There is never a time when your faith will not work. Always means always. God expects you to be triumphant.

1 Peter 5:8 says: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour." The devil may be on the prowl night and day, but don't worry; God never takes a vacation. He never leaves you on your own against the scheming, predatory attacks of the enemy.

God says this about the devil. "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." (See Isaiah 59:19.)

In the midst of a flood of tribulation, God is with you, waiting in the chambers of faith. All He asks of you is that you lift up a feeble cry of, "God, I thank you!" Just lift up a whisper; that's all He needs to release a wall of protection and provision that will give you the victory.

2 Corinthians 1:6 reveals what the attitude of every Christian in the middle of affliction should be: "And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation."

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Paul believed that God walked with him through tribulation. He never doubted that God was the provider of grace, peace, mercy, and comfort. Paul thought of tribulation as a school of adventure where he would be equipped and prepared to be a greater servant for others than he had ever been.

He knew that God was not the author of tribulation, and he understood that God did not take him through trouble to teach him. He also recognized that every time something bad came his way, God was there to make all things work together for his good, as long as he handled the situation God's way.

Paul had no fear; therefore, he could rejoice over his weaknesses and be glad for his lack. He could be joyful in the most difficult places because he knew God was with him, and deliverance was just a breath away.

I'll remind you again: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place." Always means all the time, without exception, under all circumstances, and with no restrictions. Victory is yours. What are you waiting for?

Watch Your Attitude

Attitudes are everything in war. The most important one is this: brace for trouble. We are warned of tribulation all through the Bible, so we should not be rattled when the devil shows up.

If I had my way, we would get Christians saved,

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lift them up off their knees to their feet, then look them straight in the eye and say, "Trouble is coming." This way they can brace for it.

The gospel is not, "You need to get saved so that God can fix every problem and make sure you don't have any more, ever." The gospel is, "You need to get saved, and when you do the devil will hate you and send you trouble, but God will be there always to love you through it and deliver you from it." Sometimes we candy-coat the gospel so much, we nearly deceive people into conversion. This is wrong.

We cannot be deluded, but we must prepare ourselves for the trouble that lies ahead. We must know it is coming, and we must remind ourselves daily to depend on the God who is with us to deliver us from the "many afflictions" that are guaranteed to come to the righteous. This way our attitude can remain pure, and our trust in God can remain steadfast.

Ephesians 6:11 shows us the next important attitude we must have, and this is a posture of preparedness for battle. It says: "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

Since we know the devil is coming, we need to get dressed for battle. That's what basic training is all about; learning to be dressed and ready for the battlefield at all times.

If you think a soldier takes off his boots and puts his helmet aside or his gun away when he's in a foxhole, you're living in a movie dream world. The boots, helmet, and gun stay on the soldier at all times

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when the enemy is flinging bombs over his head. He's taught to never put them down, even when he's sleeping.

Our armor must be on at all times, too. We cannot lay it down for any reason. And we must put on the whole armor, not just part of it, because we never know what part we may need in a given day. We must be dressed and ready to fight at a moment's notice.

When we put on the armor of God, we must put on a good attitude with it, because no soldier can pout his way through war. We need to use our faith effectively, and faith does not work well with whining and complaining. Ask Israel what happens when people murmur instead of trusting God. A whole generation of murmurers had to perish before God could take them into the Promised Land.

When things get hard, don't whine, but rejoice. Don't complain, but shout the praise. Stay out of "Victim-ville" and focus on Heaven. Take whatever trouble has been delivered to you, turn it around, and allow it to create a platform for you to be changed from one glory to another glory. Though things are going wrong, use it for your good!

Your attitude must allow room for God to use the opportunity tribulation presents to prune you. It's the perfect time to trim out the unnecessary junk in your life. You can see eternal changes come by putting yourself in the hands of God through His Word. You can be transformed by absorbing what God says instead of listening to the evidence the devil is spreading all around you.

You also need an attitude of steadfastness while

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preparing for battle. Do everything you can do, and know that as long as you are doing it, tribulation will not be successful. Use what you have as an offensive weapon, and don't wait until you have to take a defensive stance.

We read this before, but I want to remind you again of 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 which says: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

This is a great attitude to have. We must remind ourselves that affliction is light, not heavy. It is temporary, not eternal. It is no worse than any other tribulation endured by any other man. It is lightweight, and it's passing by.

If we look at the evidence produced by the circumstances, the things which are seen, we will lose our focus and begin to believe we're going to fail. We need to look at the things which are not seen, the eternal promises of God, which far outweigh what we can experience with our five human senses.

1 Peter 5:10 gives us the good news. It says: "The God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you."

It's not the suffering for a little while you should be glad about, but the perfection, establishment, and settling that should make you shout. God can do great

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works in you when your faith is focused on Him.

It amazes me how much we can hear from God when we are under pressure, and how little we hear when life is going great. The difference is not in God, but it is in our intensity and focus on spiritual things.

Another important attitude while you are in tribulation is to turn your focus toward others to become an instructor and a mentor. Help someone else endure as a good soldier. Help them turn to the Word of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Help them to stand firm when the rockets are flying overhead.

If you can turn your focus to someone else, and get it off of you for awhile, you will find your faith will increase and your strength will be renewed. It's the law of sowing and reaping. If you sow strength to someone else, you will reap strength. If you sow faith and encouragement, you will reap more of the same.

Finally, always keep an attitude of separation in mind. What does this mean? You need to keep your own calling, talents, and gifts out of the fight. Don't let the things you are going through keep you from working in the Kingdom and exercising your gifts. Don't let trouble put you on the sidelines.

You are vital to the work of the Kingdom. We cannot make it without you, so don't let us down by laying aside what God has called you to do in a season of tribulation. The end is coming, so keep on working while it is yet day, for night is nearly here when no man shall work again.

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CHAPTER THREE WHERE IS GOD IN THIS MESS?

Acts 14:22 says: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

It's as if the kingdom of God is surrounded by problems. No matter who we are or what we do, principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places are working overtime against us. They are trying to prevent the entry of the unrighteous into the Kingdom, and they are doing their best to hinder the promotion of the righteous.

This could be discouraging, but we must remember that our reward is not on this side of the conflict; it is on the other side. We cannot focus on victories here only, but we must remind ourselves that our highest reward will come in Heaven. We fully expect to win here and now, but we do not base our faith on how quickly we succeed, or on how it all comes to pass. The fight is on, and we must remain engaged no matter how long it takes to win.

Passive people who refuse to go through conflict will ultimately settle down into a compromising lifestyle. They'll hear the good news, but never ascend to it. They'll read the great promises, but count them as mere suggestions. They will be content to be

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hearers only, never doers; deceiving themselves into believing they are living the Christian life.

Questioning God will become a habit for those who do not understand that tribulation is a part of the Kingdom. "Why, God?" will become their daily prayer. Instead of fighting, they will submit to trouble. Instead of trusting in God and His Word, they will fold up and quit.

They will lay down their calling, talents, and giftings, and they will do it to try to avoid further pain. It won't work, because the devil will hate them just as much, and he will not back down simply because they have given in to the pressure.

Walking away from the battle is not an option. So, we must learn how to respond when the messes of life crop up and get in the way. How do we react when unexpected trouble comes to greet us in the morning? What do we do when long-term tribulation will not go away?

Our reaction in these times is much more important than how we act when life is smooth sailing all around. Our reaction can literally mean the difference between life and death; not just physical life, but life eternal.

If the Lord Be With Us

Constant tribulation can cause well-meaning Christians to question God's purpose and doubt His presence. When the heat is on they cry, "Where's the air?" They wonder where God is hiding when the flames are seven times hotter than they've ever been

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before.

Long-term tribulation can cause good men and women to wonder if God remembers them. "God, do you know what I'm going through?" may be the question of the hour. Constant trouble can make even Bible-believing, faith-preaching, devil-stomping people question God's love and His activity on their behalf.

Some people are convinced that God works for everybody else, but He takes a vacation every time they come to the throne of grace. They'll travel miles and miles to ask someone else to lay hands on them, when a whisper from their own lips would bring a supernatural intervention. These are the kind of things that reveal a crippled mind-set because of past failures.

There was such a man in the Old Testament whose world had been shattered, and as a result his thinking had become impaired. Judges 6:13 shows us his thoughts when it reveals his words: "And Gideon said unto him (the angel), Oh my lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

Here we see evidence of a faith that had been eroded because of tribulation, sorrow, distress, trouble, anxiety, lack, hopelessness, and a long-enduring battle.

"If God is with me, why has all this junk happened to me?" This was Gideon's question. Today we know when things are at their worst, it is often a good

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indication that we're doing something right. Back then, though, Gideon did not know. All he knew was what he could see, which was nothing but pain, despair, and destruction.

Gideon had thrown off his identity as a man of God and let go of his faith. God told him in verse 12 that he was a mighty man of valor, but Gideon could not see it. All he saw when he looked in the mirror was a man hiding behind a wall trying to eke out a meal. God looked at the same man, and He saw a commander about to lead an army.

We're not so different today. When we sow a seed, we expect a harvest. When we speak a word, we expect a result. What we don't expect is a patch of weeds to shoot up and choke out our planting. We're just as surprised as Gideon was when trouble strikes, and if the trouble continues over weeks, months, or years, we can become just as discouraged.

Don't You Care?

We really shouldn't think it's strange when crazy things happen in life following God's leading or our planting. Mark 4:15 says: "These are they by the way side, where the Word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan comes immediately, and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts."

Notice Satan comes immediately to try to steal that which was sown. He doesn't wait around until the plant is two feet high; he jumps in there right away to choke it out before it ever sees the light of day.

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When Jesus first taught this message, the disciples got a big taste of it before the day ended. On that particular day Jesus finished His teaching, and then He told the disciples to load the boat and take Him across the lake to the other side. Notice Jesus told them to go, which was the leading of God, but when they rowed away from the safety of the shore a big wind came up and threatened to kill them.

Jesus was sound asleep in the back of the boat when the storm began to rage, so the disciples shook Him awake and asked this revealing question: "Master, don't You care that we are perishing?"

Let's see. Jesus had told them to go to the other side, setting the course for their lives. He had given them a command, which meant He fully intended for them to carry it out. Was the wind His idea? No. Was the storm a friend of the disciples? No. Did it bring trouble, hardship, vexation, and fear? Yes. So, what was it, God's will or tribulation?

It was tribulation, which is why Jesus was surprised when they came asking such a faithless question. Of course He cared. He was riding in the same boat, wasn't He? The answer Jesus gave them shows us what God thinks about us when we face trouble with fear instead of faith.

Notice what He said in verse 40 after He rebuked the wind and calmed the storm: "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" No faith? Jesus perceived they had no faith because they came to Him in fear begging, rather than rebuking the storm themselves, or at the very least waking Him up in faith, fully expecting Him to save them.

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When the disciples feared for their lives, the first thing they questioned was if Jesus cared about them. This is the same thing that bothered Gideon back in Judges, and it's the same thing the enemy will try to get you to wonder about when tribulation comes your way.

"Where is God? Why is this happening to me? What have I done to deserve this? Why isn't God doing something to help me? Doesn't He care anymore?" No matter how you phrase the question, if you wonder whether or not God cares for you, it's a good sign you are living in fear and not in faith. Questions like these will erode your trust in God, and they will torment you more than the tribulation itself if you let them.

Now the good news: God had mercy on Gideon, and Jesus saved the disciples. There is hope for you, too, but the time has come to stop questioning God and start trusting Him again.

An Unshakable Faith

It's kind of hard to build something with one hand when you are wrestling with something else with the other hand. It would be like trying to put together a swing set for your children with your left hand while your right hand is busy wrestling Hulk Hogan. Guess what swing set won't get built.

Psalm 46:1 says: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Notice the confidence in this verse. We could all make this confession, but how many of us really believe it? The first part is

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easy to say because it simply gives honor to the attributes of God. The second half of the verse is the tough part.

Remember, left hand doing one thing, right hand doing another won't cut it. If you're giving lip service to the attributes of God on one hand, but questioning His presence in times of trouble on the other hand, you are double-minded, and you will not succeed at much of anything.

To really believe that God is a present help in times of trouble, you have to first believe that He is with you always, all the time, never leaving nor forsaking, and then you have to act like you believe it. This shakes some of our faith because of past failures and questions that have attacked this reality.

Psalm 46:2-3 goes on to say: "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Based on the revelation that God was with them, the psalmist and those who sang this song were convinced that God was always with them, no matter how bad the outward shaking seemed.

They believed with one hand, and they acted in faith with the other. There was no contradictory thinking and no double-mindedness. They believed, they sang, and they acted on what they believed.

The next two verses say: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God

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shall help her, and that right early."

Notice the firm soundness of faith. When we have a persuasion like this, trusting whole-heartedly that God is with us, nothing will be able to move us. Nothing will shake us up or make us question God's trustworthy nature. When questions about God's faithfulness are removed from our vocabulary, a firmness of faith will be the result.

The remainder of the 46th Psalm says: "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He has made in the earth. He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder; He burns the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah."

Notice the phrase I have underlined. No matter what calamities they could think of to write about, up to and including the removal of the earth, there was only one thing that mattered: The Lord of hosts is with us. In other words, "Do whatever you want to against us, around us, or to us; we will not flinch or back away because we know our God is with us."

Think of all of the things that make you question God, and ask yourself this: "Is God with me? Is He not my God? Is anything too hard for Him?" If you know He is with you, then why do you wonder about His ability, His faithfulness, or His love nature? Why

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don't you simply believe He is with you to do you good with the same passion and confidence as the psalmist?

When you get a revelation of where God is in the midst of your mess, you will have an unshakable faith in Him. If you realize that God is with you, *with you*, **with you**, you will not question the outcome anymore. Your right hand and your left hand will get together in one motion, and you will be sustained in the battle we call life.

Wherever God is, there is victory. Wherever He is, the mess will cease. Wherever He is, the calm will come. Wherever He is, you will prevail. Though unseen, unheard, and undetected by the senses, God is with you, and He is for you.

God is not a silent observer, waiting to see what your faith alone will do. No! Your faith alone may not be able to overcome, but if you put your faith in Him, He will become your shield, your fortress, your high tower, your strong defense, your banner of triumph, and your overcoming victory.

God is With You!

Deuteronomy 31:6 says: "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord your God, He it is that goes with you; He will not fail you, nor forsake you."

This verse could say: "Don't fear or be afraid of those who bring persecution, of situations that bring tribulation, or of any devil that brings hardship and distress. For the Lord your God is with you, and He

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is the one who goes with you, stays with you, and never leaves you alone. He will not fail you, and He will never forsake you."

The phrase "He will not fail you" is unique. It carries with it the connotation that God will not relax until victory comes on your behalf. He will not withdraw nor refrain His anger against those who come against you for a righteous cause. He will not be silent, but He will constantly man the forces of Heaven on your behalf. Though God is unseen and unfelt, you can rest assured He is ever active on your behalf.

When it says God will not forsake you, it means He will not pull back from what He has said He will do for you. He will not relent until you move from distress to hope, from hope to faith, and from faith to victory. Hallelujah!

I don't know about you, but I am glad that God will not fail me. I'm glad He's not going to leave me out on a limb. He will go no further in my battle than I am able to go because He is with me, and He intends to stay with me until the war is over.

We desperately need a revelation that God is with us. We don't have to feel His presence 24 hours a day, although I do enjoy feelings as much as the next person. How much more blessed are we when we act without feelings?

Sometimes I dance just because God said to dance, not because I have chills running up and down my spine. Sometimes I pray because God told me to, not because I see the glory cloud in my room. Sometimes I act weird because God said I am

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peculiar, not because I sense the angelic hosts around me. Sometimes I shout because God told me to shout with the voice of triumph, not because I see Jesus standing next to me.

We need to stop waiting for a spiritual manifestation before we do what God says to do. We need to get about doing it because He says to, because we obey without question, and because we have a deep-seated revelation that God is our help in times of trouble. We must know He is with us, even if we never sense His presence again.

Too often people try to imagine the visitations of God as so enormous and graphic that they miss the still small voice or the gentle breeze that brushes by to say, "I am here."

I've had God give me one thought that was enough to run for a lifetime, but others were disappointed because He did not visibly enter the room with me. They turned and would not listen to the thought, but it radically changed my life because I was more interested in what He said than in how He said it or what manifestation came along with His words.

God might visit you with a simple idea, and you might miss it because you are looking on the horizon for some bright light. God might visit you with one promise, and you might brush it aside because you are hoping for an audible voice. Don't miss it!

God might visit you in a song. It might seem too simple or too vague, but if you will embrace it, sing it with your whole heart, and begin to live in the revelation of it, your life will be transformed.

I remember a time 11 years ago when God did

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appear to me. He came in the room, placed a mantle on my head, and advanced me into the realm of the miraculous. I remember that as soon as the visitation ended I stood there thinking, "Wow!" A split second later I heard this in my spirit, "You can wow all you want, or you can act on it by faith." From that moment on, I had to live by faith.

No matter how simple or how spectacular the manifestation of the presence of God may be, the only thing that will sustain you after the fact is faith in His continuing, day-to-day, no matter if I ever see Him again, presence. He is with you!

God does not draw back. He does not lie. And He will not diverge from what He said, whether He said it in His Word, whether He said it audibly, in a dream or a vision, or in a still small voice that only you can hear. God is with you, and you shall prevail!

Don't Accept It!

2 Corinthians 1:2-4 says: "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforts 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."

God is the God of grace and peace, of mercy and comfort, not the God of tribulation. God cannot be divided against Himself. If He is our comfort in tribulation, He can never be the author of it, nor can

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He be the prolonging of it.

Verses 5-10 go on to describe tribulation. Verse five calls it suffering. Verse six calls it affliction. Verse eight calls it trouble and being pressed out of measure. Verse nine calls it despairing of life, and verse ten calls it a manifestation of the extinguishing of life itself.

All of these are satanic in nature because they fall under the banner of John 10:10 which says: "The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

None of the things described in 2 Corinthians 1:5-10 are life-giving, but they are all opposed to life and salvation. Paul knew if the intervention of God through comfort and help was not manifested, then life would be swallowed up, and tribulation would be victorious.

This is why we should never be slack with small problems. Little things can lead to big funerals if we don't deal with them effectively.

So often we handle tribulation passively, thinking it's just a bump in the road. No! It is not a bump in the road, but it is an attempt to start something in your life that will lead from stealing, to killing, to utter destruction. The worst thing you can ever do is get used to tribulation.

The devil came to Jesus one time with what seemed like a reasonable suggestion. "Why don't you just make the stones into bread?" (See Matthew 4:3.) Jesus did not brush this thought aside or react passively to it. He recognized it as a demonic attack

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and an assault upon His divine identity. He struck back forcefully, and He drove the devil away from His presence.

Would be to God that we would respond in like manner when little thoughts come our way. When you hear things in your head like, "It's just a part of life", you better shout, "No! This is not life and it more abundantly, so you be gone from me, you foul devil!"

My life is filled with joy, abundance, prosperity, health, length of days, happiness, and blessing. If something comes tapping at my door trying to sell me anything else, I will quickly shut the door and send it packing.

I refuse to give place to the devil. I cast down vain imaginations and "simple" thoughts about my life or God's faithfulness. I step on them, make a board out of them, and beat the devil half crazy with it while I send him right back where he came from.

This is how we need to act when tribulation comes. This is how we need to stand up for what God wants us to have in life. Christians need to stop being so gullible and deceived. They need to stop sucking on every straw that's passed their way and begin to say, "No! This is not God, and I will not accept it."

The God of Comfort

Let's go back to 2 Corinthians 1:2-4 which says: "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies,

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and the God of all comfort; who comforts 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."

What is grace? It is that which gives favor, delight, sweetness, and loving-kindness. It supplies strength, knowledge, faith, and benefits. It serves to lift us up and give us victory, with no exchange of resources or requirements of strength from us. That's a perfect definition of the cross.

Peace is security, safety, prosperity, fearlessness, and contentment. It is a calm, unchanging state in a raging, unstable world.

God is also merciful, which means He is compassionate. His mercy nature produces acts of love in motion. Is tribulation an act of love? Absolutely not. We already established that tribulation comes to separate us from the love of God. Love and tribulation are completely opposed to one another.

Finally, God is the God of comfort, making Him the God of encouragement, instruction, consolation, stirring, and refreshment. He gives us words to encourage or admonish us, depending on the situation. His ever-abiding and comforting acts of love in essence say, "Don't quit!"

Tribulation never encourages anyone. It shouts, "Give up! Give up now! All is lost!" God comes in the midst of tribulation with comfort that refutes everything tribulation would like you to believe. God remains with you in the midst of trouble, comforting you even to the end of the world (see Matthew 28:20).

You may feel like you are going under for the

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last time, but God is the voice upon many waters that says, "I am here! Let's stand together! Let's win!". In other words, every time a wave comes to take you under, God is there to pop you back up!

2 Corinthians 1:4-5 says: "Who comforts 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. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ."

If your tribulation intensifies, God will supply a supernatural overflow in order for you to become an overcomer. The overflow will equip you to not only win your battle, but also to be able to reach out and help someone else in their time of trouble. You will learn where your deliverance comes from, and you will be able to pass that information on to someone living under the same devastating weight of trouble.

Remember, abundant life comes from Christ, so as the pressure ratchets up in a situation, Jesus comes closer to provide more abundance, more encouragement, more grace, more peace, more mercy, and more comfort. Tribulation can never outdo the love of God in Christ Jesus, so you never have to worry if there will be enough grace to see you through.

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CHAPTER FOUR IT'S UP TO YOU

Who is responsible for our victories? Is it God, or is it us? This is a question for the ages, but the answer is very simple. In every miracle there is a two-fold combination that brings about a manifestation of God's Word. There is of course God's part - the provision of power, the provision of grace and mercy, and the abundance of His love which overcomes all. But we as Christians also have an important part to play.

What many people forget is our responsibility when it comes to the release of God's goodness in our lives. It's not just that we passively believe, and then an answer magically lands in our laps. If we want to win and defeat tribulation, it's up to us to initiate faith and to destroy all hindrances that would get in the way. God awaits our release of faith, because He cannot move without it.

This might seem like a foreign concept to you, but the life of Jesus gives us the perfect example. There was a time when Jesus was ministering in His hometown, and He was prepared to work miracles there just as He had done everywhere He went. He was ready and willing, but He was not able. Why?

The Bible says: "And He (Jesus) could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon

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a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. And He went round about the villages, teaching." (Mark 6:5-6)

Notice that Jesus "could" do no mighty work, not that He did not want to or had somehow run out of power. The source of the trouble was "their unbelief." It's obvious that whether or not they got a miracle was up to them, not up to Him.

This may make some people choke, especially those who believe that God is sovereign in all things and goes about doing what He wants, when and where He wants. I agree, God is sovereign, but I disagree that He does whatever He wants without our participation.

God is sovereign to watch over His Word to perform it. If we meet the criteria set forth in the Word, God will back it up and move Heaven and earth to bring it to pass in our lives. On the flip side, if we fail, it will not be His fault, but clearly our own.

I can feel people cringing as I write this, but let's look at Jesus, our greatest example, one more time. We find this principle in multiple scriptures, including the following: "Then touched He (Jesus) their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you." (See Matthew 9:29.) What was the answer dependent on? It was "according to their faith".

Hebrews 4:2 confirms it when it says: "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

The Word of God is profitable, but only when we mix faith with it. Miracles and deliverance from

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every form of tribulation are awaiting our release of faith. Angels are standing at the ready to launch themselves into our battles. Signs and wonders are just a prayer away. All of these are at your fingertips, but clearly, *it's up to you.*

Help My Unbelief!

In Mark 9:14-26, you can read the story of a devastating situation that befell a father and son. These kinds of stories are all too common, and they often make us prisoners of hopelessness.

Let me paraphrase the tale. One day Jesus came upon a crowd of people who were all fired up about something. Some scribes in the crowd were questioning the disciples and causing a stir. Jesus asked the scribes what they were talking about, and a man nearby spoke up to say, "Master, I have brought my son to You, and he has a dumb spirit. Wherever I take him, the spirit buffets him, and he foams and gnashes with his teeth."

The man went on to say, "I spoke to Your disciples and asked them to cast the spirit out, but they couldn't do it." Jesus gave an answer I'm sure no one expected. He said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him to Me." This statement was not just directed at the man, but it was directed at the disciples, too.

The child was brought to Jesus, and when the spirit saw Him he (the spirit) immediately knocked the boy to the ground. The youngster began to wallow and foam at the mouth, but Jesus stood there

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watching for a moment. Then He asked the father, "How long has it been since this came to him?" The man answered that it came on him when he was a little boy.

The man went on to explain that many times the spirit had thrown his son into the fire or into the water to try to kill him. And then he said, "But if You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Jesus turned the tables and said, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes." At this, the father cried out, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

The crowd came running toward them, so Jesus rebuked the spirit and said, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him, and enter no more into him!" The spirit cried out and tossed the youngster around again, and then it came out of him. The boy lay on the ground appearing to be dead, but Jesus grabbed him by the hand so that he stood up delivered and well.

Now, when Jesus was inside the house later, his disciples came to Him privately and asked, "Why couldn't we cast the spirit out?" Again Jesus surprised them with His answer. He said, "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

In Matthew 17:20, in another telling of this story, it was noted that Jesus answered the disciples' question about their failure this way: "Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto

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you."

In this account we see several things. Number one, the devil will attack anyone he can, innocent or guilty. This child had done nothing wrong when the devil came on him as a little boy, and yet the attack came anyway. We also see that the intent of the devil was to kill the boy, not just to torment him.

We also discover that the father had unbelief in his life, and when it was mixed with the unbelief of the disciples it impaired them all, leaving the boy in bondage and undelivered until Jesus came on the scene. Unbelief had become a terrible task master in the lives of this family, and it drove them to the brink of destruction.

Unbelief is our mortal enemy. If we allow it to grow and flourish in our lives, it will open the door for the devil to have dominion, power, and lordship over us. He will take our children, our faith, our blessing, our life, our soundness of mind, our marriage, our health, and everything that faith has ever promised. That is unless we get tough by resisting him and fighting back against unbelief.

I don't know about you, but I don't want my grandchildren taken captive because of my unbelief. I want my faith to inspire their faith, and for our joined faith to prevail over the devil and all of his evil works.

Why Could We Not?

The disciples obviously believed they could cast the spirit out, or they would not have tried. They

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believed because they had been given power by Jesus to cast out devils, and because they had gone forth and cast them out before. This case stumped them, and they were confused by their failure.

In Luke 10:17 we can read about their past successes. It says: "The seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Your name." What transpired from the time of their success to the defeat of this story? Why did they go from casting out devils to being thwarted by Satan's plan?

The disciples had authority, power, and dominion over the devil, but still they had come to a screeching halt. They were equipped, but they came up short. Everything Jesus had said to them to launch them into their success had come to a head in one battle that sought to destroy the faith that was established in them.

Jesus identified their faithlessness and unbelief, but how did they get to this place? Where did the unbelief come from?

From Jesus' answer we can conclude that their unbelief came from letting go of things they had done before; again, taking us back to the sin of omission I mentioned in chapter one. Jesus made it clear: "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

Didn't the disciples pray? I'm sure they did. Didn't they fast? Probably. Somewhere along the line, though, the intensity needed for continued success dwindled. They let their faith be drained and their unbelief be strengthened. Through unbelief

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they became hardened and blind to the things of God.

The same can happen to us. When unbelief wins in a troubling situation, it will breed more unbelief. Soon, we may think God is no longer on our side. We may believe He has left us, and He is no longer working with us for victory.

Unbelief will kill our faith, which is why it must be dealt with forcefully. Notice Jesus did not mess around with it, but He took charge and cast out the spirit so that defeat was not etched on the disciples' minds.

When Christians say things like, "Well you never know what God's gonna do. You don't always get what you ask for, and God sometimes puts things on you", all they are doing is planting seeds of unbelief and pushing them far beneath the surface of the soil. They are ingraining defeat in their minds, and allowing a slothful, sleepy slumber to grow in the fields of inheritance in which their children live. In essence, they are encouraging the growth of things in their families that will grow up to choke out and destroy faith.

I've heard people say, "God took grandma so He could save the family." Please, why do people think like this? God can convict people of their sin without wiping out half the family in the process. I don't want my grandkids thinking that I have to be killed for them to stay saved.

I've heard this one, too. "God takes our loved ones to draw us closer to Him." Wouldn't it be better if God would draw us closer by the goodness He talks about in Romans 2:4? Wouldn't it be nice if

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He would remember instead the words of James 4:8 which says: "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."?

Why do people always assume the worst of God? These thoughts are evil, and yet people put them in their hearts, and they become addicted to negativity. This kind of thinking is filling multitudes with unbelief on a daily basis.

We can seed ourselves with unbelief and not even know we are doing it. We speak our disappointments, or we say things like, "I wonder why it didn't happen?" I don't know. Go seek the scriptures, judge yourself, and find out if you missed it. If you did miss it, pick yourself up and stand again because it's not over until God says it's over.

In our story the disciples were obviously upset by their failure, but Jesus did not sugarcoat the answer. He put them on notice that they needed to deal with specific areas of their lives in order to get back on track and give unbelief a kick to the curb. We should all take note and learn.

Dealing with Devils

I want you to notice something in Mark 9:18. It says: "And wherever he takes him, he tears him..." The inference here is that the devil took the child as his own and did whatever he wanted to with him.

Wouldn't you hate to have a child so bound by your unbelief that she could be taken by the devil any time he decided to?

And notice the phrase, "he takes him", showing

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you that this spirit had a personality and a will. This was an evil spirit operating as a "he", not an "it". The trouble did not come from an evil mist or an unrecognizable power. The spirit was real, and he needed to be dealt with directly and forcefully.

You have to learn how to deal with devils like this one, and with spirits of unbelief, not only for yourself, but also to protect your family from eruptions of unbelief. If unbelief has found its way into your house, it's time to deal with it now.

The verse goes on to say: "...and he foams, and gnashes with his teeth, and pines away: and I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not." The verse is specific that they "could not". They had the authority, but they couldn't do it.

Unbelief will short-circuit Kingdom authority. If you have devil problems, and you can't get a manifestation of the promises of God, you should be crying, "God help my unbelief!"

God knows exactly where the unbelief is located, and He knows exactly what you need to do to get rid of it. Hebrews 4:13 says: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

God knows everything about every situation. He knows your heart, its thoughts and intents, and the outcome of every situation if you continue on the path you are on right now. You can keep doing the same things and getting the same results, or you can get serious with God and let Him deal with the secret places of hindrance in your life. It might not be a

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pleasant journey, but in the end He will help you deal with it wisely, and you will have victory.

Mark 9:20 says: "And they brought him unto Him: and when he saw Him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming." Let me boil this verse down to the most important point. They brought the child to Jesus, and when they did the spirit knocked the boy to the ground to start the wallowing and foaming act that had always worked to scare everyone else, but Jesus was not moved.

This shows you that you cannot be moved by the things you see and feel, or you will fail. Jesus saw the same thing everyone else saw, but He was not phased by it. He did not look at the temporal, earthly mess. He instead looked at the power His Father had given Him. He was not shocked by what He saw because He knew the situation was about to be reversed.

Mark 9:22 goes on to say: "And often it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if You can do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Again, we see the destruction the devil tried to bring to this family. He wasn't just trying to mess up the boy's life with tribulation; he was trying to kill him.

In verses 25-26 Jesus took control: "When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead."

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Deliverance is just a breath away for you, just as it was for this boy and his father. The question is, are you willing to deal with the devils in your life? Are willing to face your own shortcomings in the process? If you are, your tribulation will be reversed, but if you are unwilling to confront what needs to be confronted, you will stay the same for a long, long time.

The Answer

In verse 29 Jesus answered the disciples' question, "Why could we not?" when He said: "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

Here Jesus revealed two parts of the three-fold cord that every believer must weave together and keep intact in his life, especially in times of trouble. The three-fold cord consists of revelation of the Word, prayer, and fasting.

The disciples walked with "the Word made flesh", and they had a revelation of His power and might. They even understood it enough to cast out devils and heal the sick in times past. Theirs was not a lack of revelation, but a lack of the other two cords in the three-fold collection of spiritual resources.

The second part of the cord is a life of prayer, which is the exercise of faith built on a relationship with God and intimacy with His Spirit. Prayer is not just a bunch of patterns and legalistic repetition (although patterns can be a starting place), but it is something that you speak out of your heart.

There are days when I want to say, "Abba

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Father!", and there are days when I don't feel like it. No matter what, I will always talk to God out of my heart like I do with my wife, and He hears me.

We should talk to our Father in Heaven in spirit and in truth, not in some legalistic mumbo jumbo. We should talk to Him as if we are walking with Him down the streets of Galilee on a cool summer evening.

We can share our hearts and speak openly with Him. We can thank Him for the promises in His Word and tell Him how grateful we are for His provision. We can worship Him and tell Him we love Him, singing praises as part of our prayer time.

We can stop and listen for His still, small voice, and we can respond to it until we are clothed with His presence and His power from on high. Prayer should be so much more than asking for things. It should be fellowship, deepening relationship, and becoming more and more like the One we love.

The third part of the cord is a lifestyle of fasting, which produces a release of freedom. Fasting is a key too many in the body of Christ have forgotten, but it is essential for living freely and receiving the promises of God.

This three-fold cord is necessary in every believer's life. It's not just for blessing, but it is for combating unbelief in times of trouble, and for exercising and growing faith.

There will be times when one of the three may be stronger for a season, and then another will rise to the top. We each have different strengths at different times, but we should never concentrate on one to the

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elimination of the other two. They need to be a three-fold cord woven together in a balanced way in your life.

The Response to Fasting

Since fasting is the least understood of the three-fold cord, I want to spend the most time unveiling its power and importance.

Fasting breaks strongholds, and it uproots the planting of unbelief. Fasting cannot be underestimated, nor can it be overemphasized. Fasting is a pre-determined act of faith that God has revealed to us in the Word. If we will do what fasting requires of us, we will get the rewards promised.

You may hate fasting, and frankly so do I, but I do it all the time because I love the results. You may hate going to work, but you know you love the paycheck, and so you get up every day and go to work. If you hate fasting, it does not mean you should avoid it. Get up and fast, knowing the rewards will be profitable for you.

Tithing is a similar exercise with a pre-determined result promised. People often misunderstand tithing, but it's pretty simple: God commands it, and we do it. There are no negotiations, and it doesn't take a rocket scientist to carry it out. God does not want the food left in the cupboard when you are fasting any more than He wants the money you give when you tithe. What God wants is for you to experience the benefits and rewards of both.

There is a pre-determined response to tithing

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found in Malachi 3:10-11 which says: "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, says the Lord of hosts."

This is great and relatively easy. You tithe, and then you let God open the windows of Heaven while you get prepared for blessing that you don't even have room to receive. I like that.

There is also a pre-determined response to fasting declared in Isaiah 58:6-14 which says: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh?"

"Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your reward. Then shall you call, and the Lord shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall

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your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noonday.

"And the Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of you shall build the old waste places: you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

"If you turn away your foot from the sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words: then shall you delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

Again, a simple action on our part brings forth a tremendous response from Heaven. God has chosen the fast according to verse six, and because He has chosen it, you can trust that it will work every time.

The Purpose of Fasting

Notice in verse eight it says: "Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rereward."

Who does the light belong to? You. Who does the

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health belong to? You. Who does the righteousness belong to? You! They are yours already, but the fast will loose them and bring them to pass in your life.

This is why Jesus told the disciples that their failure would be reversed by prayer and fasting. The power they possessed was bound when they tried to cast out the spirit, and it was prevented from springing forth into the situation. The power belonged to them, but fasting was needed to break it free. There is no substitute for fasting because nothing else will break things free like fasting will.

Verse nine takes you further when it says: "Then shall you call, and the Lord shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am." Evidently, there are things hindering your prayer life that only fasting will loose. This is why Jesus coupled prayer and fasting together.

There are so many things that are yours already, but you don't have them in your life because of the yoke of the enemy that keeps them from you. Unbelief is a yoke master and a faith barrier. It must be taken down by a simple thing we call fasting.

The trick is to do it, just as you tithe. Do it because you want to be obedient, even if you don't understand it all. Do it with joy and expectation for the reward after the fast is over.

There is one last thing that ties in with fasting, and it also has a pre-determined outcome. We find it in Psalm 22:3 which says: "You are holy, O You that inhabits the praises of Israel." If you praise Him, God will make His habitation in your praise.

This is crucial to any victory. You must praise,

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before you ever see one thing move in your direction. You must shout the victory, before you see light at the end of the tunnel. You must lift up your hands that hang down and glorify your Father for bringing you through, before anything changes.

These things are not trial and error. You tithe, you fast, and you praise continually, without giving up, and without whining because it does not come on your schedule. You weather the passage of time, and you withstand the situation, because at the end of your endurance there will be a manifestation of salvation in your life. God will show up, and when He does, you will go to higher heights and deeper depths than you have ever known.

Dealing with Unbelief

The Bible says: "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." (See Philippians 4:13.) So why aren't Christians doing "all things"? Do we really believe "all things" are possible, or are we constantly shifting things in our heads from possible to impossible based on the situation we are in?

How do Christians doubt when God is with them? He is in us, with us, and all around us, and yet we doubt, and we let unbelief get the best of us. It's time to stop it.

Unbelief can lead to a hardened heart which will prevent "all things" from coming to pass. It's not God's fault. He made the promise, and He is ready to bring it forth in our lives, but we may be the problem. Remember, if there will be victory, it's up to us.

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Unbelief stops our ears from hearing and our hearts from believing. Look at the disciples. They walked with the living Word day in and day out. They watched Him perform miracles day after day after day. They heard Him speak, and they even went out and did what He said with amazing results, but still unbelief got a hold on them, and they stopped hearing and believing.

Unbelief is so dangerous because it can begin as a tiny, nearly imperceptible seed. Maybe you ran up against a failure, and instead of getting up and going again you laid down a portion of your faith, and you gave up on a promise. It seemed like saying, "Oh, well" was a simple thing, and it wouldn't hurt anyone, but "Oh, well" led to "Why?" which led to "God doesn't hear me anymore."

You need to stop the seed of unbelief before it grows into a mighty planting in your heart. You must root it out, and don't let it grow back!

Disappointment, discouragement, dealing with sudden tragedies, living in grief for too long - all of these feed unbelief and open the door for more and more questions about God's faithfulness. We allow our soil to get polluted, and then our good seeds die under the strain.

Please, do not be condemned by what I am saying. This in no way diminishes your worth to God or to the Kingdom. It is not the end of the story!

When the disciples were in trouble, Jesus told them exactly what they needed to do to correct the situation. They needed to pray and fast. They needed to dig in and go deep. They needed to get up and

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do something different so that next time the result would be different.

The Word is not sent to condemn us, but to help us overcome our struggles and to move into our inheritance as sons and daughters of God. Don't be condemned!

God wants you to have authority over the devil, and not the other way around. He wants your children to be free, not taken by some evil spirit. He wants your spouse to be blessed, not vexed by tragedy.

God does not want to see His children thrown into the fire and the water, wallowing and foaming in despair. He wants us to be delivered and free, and then He wants us to go forward to set others free. The devil wants to kill you, but God wants you to live life and it more abundantly!

In Isaiah 58:8, God said: "Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your reward."

There are many things that we are dealing with that seem to be stuck somewhere between Heaven and earth. We think we've done all to stand, and yet they are not springing forth. What's the next step? Just keep standing. Stand until you have dealt with all of the unbelief, and then they will spring forth speedily.

Life is not made of happenstance situations and carefree living. It is made of decisions based on knowledge, and actions that follow through to the end. We know God is with us, for us, in us, and

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working through us. Let's deal with unbelief at the source, and let's allow God to get about the business of blessing us.

Unlimited Faith

Hebrews 4:1-2 says: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

There is a faith which is unlimited in its scope and power. We saw it activated in the life of Jesus, but where is it today? It is in us, if we will only believe.

2 Peter 1:1 says: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

Your faith is the same as the faith of Peter, Paul, and even Jesus. The difference is the faith of Jesus overpowered unbelief, and maybe yours hasn't yet. Faith is unlimited, but we put restraints on it by our unbelief.

The Bible talks about different levels of faith - no faith, little faith, and great faith. No matter where faith ended, it began in all of us with the same "like, precious faith." The difference is what we do with our faith, how we keep it exercised, strong, and growing, and how we deal with hindrances, such as unbelief.

The Bible is made of stories of ordinary people just like you. Your name may not appear in the Bible,

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but there is a reflection of your life in the Word of God somewhere. This reflection reveals what ordinary people did while living in situations just like yours. If you will do what they did by faith, you will have the same rewards that they had.

Remember, you have "like precious faith." Your faith is not somehow less, and theirs was not somehow more. Your faith and theirs were the same in the beginning when you and they received. It's what you have done with your faith to make it grow and what you have done against unbelief that makes the difference.

Where does faith come from? Romans 10:17 says; "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." What do you hear in the Word? Someone else's story. You hear the story of a man and his son, and you gain faith to fight devils of your own. When someone hears your story of deliverance that results from your own faith venture, they will gain faith to go and fight their own battle.

We all have a story, and if we will continue to read the stories in the Word, faith will come, and it will grow. The same faith that it took for a success to be birthed the first time (when a story took place in the Bible) will come into your spirit, transform your mind, and give you faith to see the same thing in your life.

When I first got saved, I was reading in the book of 1 Samuel one day, and I discovered that God talked to Samuel as a young boy. Samuel's response was, "Here am I. Speak Lord." From that day on I would walk back and forth in our living room praying from

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about 9:00 p.m. until about 3:00 a.m. Here was my prayer: "God, I'm here if You want to talk. I want to thank You that I'm saved, and if You want to talk, I'm listening."

This went on for months because this was all I knew. I knew I was saved, and I knew God talked to people in the Bible, so why not me? One day, God spoke to me. I knew His voice as if I had been hearing it for a thousand years. When He spoke I said, "Hello, God!" He replied, "Hello, Peter!"

We can all experience His voice, just like Samuel did. We can all have prisons shaken and broken, just like Paul and Silas did. We can all see people healed of their brokenness, just like Peter and John did. We can all experience the Bible just like every person in every story did, if we will simply do what they did, remain steadfast as they were, and refuse to let unbelief ruin the plan.

Fail Not!

The disciples failed because they were faced with a devil whose presence was meant to destroy them and hinder their ministry, not because their faith started out any weaker than anyone else's. It was a test, not given by God, but given by the devil to see what they were made of. The same can happen to you.

You may be successful in an area of faith time and time again, and then one day you may find yourself facing a situation where your faith will not work. You may be faced with one devil that will be

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set against you to derail the faith you have built up over a lifetime where you were successful taking authority over many previous devils. Be careful, because it is a trap.

In Matthew 10:8, Jesus said: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely you have received, freely give." You have been given freedom to take authority over your own body, over your own household, and over devils in other willing people and households, through the name of Jesus.

You have this power, and yet there may be one devil awaiting you that will punch you in the gut and make you stumble. You will find yourself at a crossroad, and if you aren't careful, you will give in to the mindset that you no longer have power. This is a total lie, but the thoughts of this lie will buffet you.

Everything released in the Kingdom of God comes one way and one way only - by faith. It doesn't matter if it is healing, blessing, freedom, mercy, salvation, deliverance, or any other Kingdom benefit; it will only be released by the operation of faith. God has already decreed many things about you, but you must stay strong in faith to receive them.

We as Christians do not want to find ourselves walking in faithless shoes. We must be on guard at all times to protect the faith that was delivered to us by the grace of God for our good. The Bible tells us to cleanse ourselves from an evil heart of unbelief, from the evil influence of faithlessness, and from every sin which so easily besets us.

We need not fail when we are faced with

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tribulation, trials, persecution, trouble, and distress. Romans 8:37 says: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." We need to let the love of God stabilize us in the tough times.

When trouble comes knocking at your door, first remind yourself that God is with you, He loves you and will never leave you nor forsake you, and then shout Romans 8:37 from the rooftops.

No matter what comes your way, you are more than a conqueror. This is not future tense, but past tense. You may have to activate fasting, increase your prayer life, and dig back in the Word until fresh revelation comes. These are all necessary to release the end of the promise in your life, but they do not in any way diminish the fact that you are already more than a conqueror.

You will not fail, as long as God is on your side and His Word continues to prevail over every foe.

Rejoice! Be glad! Send up the victory flag because you are a winner!