

Confidence To Face The New Year

Sick with Lyme disease and other co-infections, weak in the flesh and the spirit, I found myself dependent on my wife and others to meet my needs and for the most part, to carry my burdens for both my family and the ministry of Cattle for Christ. Taking aggressive IV treatments for almost a year, unable to travel and do much of the work of the ministry that I had always done, and too tired and weak to be able to enjoy and invest in the lives of my family, I experienced feelings of helplessness, uselessness, discouragement and loneliness.

Sometimes I was unable to find the strength or clarity of mind to talk, respond to emails, return phone calls or spend time with others, even close friends and family. Unable to fully focus on all the needs of the ministry, I saw all the work that needed to be done that was going undone, and that only made things worse. The Lord had my permission to do whatever He wanted to do, but what was He doing? What was I to do? Where He was leading me? What was I to learn these trials and suffering? Would I ever feel any better and have the strength to do the things in life that make a difference in the Kingdom and the lives of people that bring me joy and purpose for living?

My faith in who He is and who I am in Him never wavered and that gave me peace, but I just could not figure out what He was wanting to do in and through me during this sickness. On many occasions, I had asked the Lord to take me home whenever I had done all He had for me to do to serve Him in this life—perhaps that time had come. I was tired. I was weak. I was at the end of my own strength and had accepted the fact that perhaps my life, my opportunity to minister to and contribute to the needs of my family and to do any significant ministry among the poor and unreached peoples had come to an end. I had no fear of dying and going to heaven, but if there was anything more I could do to invest in the lives of my family and make an eternal difference in the lives of others around the world, I wanted the time and strength to do it.

Thanks to His mercy, His comfort, His strength and the prayers of many of you who have been praying for us, God is gradually restoring my strength and given me hope that He will continue to use me for His purposes. Please do not read this testimony as a “woe is me” or “look at me” story, but see the work and the provision God the Father, the salvation and the mercies of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work and empowering of the Holy Spirit in all that He has done and is doing in my life.

As I read 2 Corinthians 1:2-11, I find this story of Paul to be my own. I am not comparing myself to Paul or my sufferings to his, but the work and faithfulness of God is the same in both life stories.

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we

have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many”.

We need only to look inwardly at our own lives, and look at the lives of others whom God has delivered from so many perils to see His goodness and His ability and faithfulness not only to meet our needs, but to also use us to meet the needs of others. As He brings us through trials and difficulties, our faith and confidence in Him increases. We learn that He is faithful in every situation and that we can face our future trials with confidence and also help others face their trials by assuring them that God is indeed able and willing to do exceedingly and abundantly above anything they can think or ask. What He has done for me, He can do for you—and even greater things. We are reminded and need to remind others of God’s promises: “‘I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord’, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” (Jer 29:11).

Paul said, the greater our suffering, the greater we see God’s mercies and our need for dependency on Him and Him alone. As you and I face trials and difficulties of every kind, they are all for the collective good. I hope my personal testimony of God’s faithfulness, mercy and provision encourages and reminds you that God is also able and willing to meet all your needs. He is a God of mercy, compassion and power—He who raises the dead! Our trials cause us to realize that our faith, joy, peace and only real hope is in Him and not in ourselves, our abilities, our possessions, our family or our circumstances.

In the midst of my sufferings, God showed me His love, mercy, peace and hope in ways that I probably would have never known had I not had to endure them. For that I am thankful. As you read my story, I hope you are encouraged and praise God for His goodness. My prayer however, is that as you go through this new year and face the trials and battles that come your way, you will also accept for yourself the hope, peace, joy, salvation and mercy for your life that come only from Christ. Wherever you are, He is there! Whatever you have done, He shed His blood to forgive! Whatever you face, His grace is sufficient! Face this New Year with confidence that He loves you and is even now drawing you unto Himself.