

10312021 "When you become a Christian," some believe, "all your troubles are over. God smoothes out all the troubles and life is easier." When you become a Christian," others say, "your troubles are just beginning. Satan didn't bother with you before, since you were on his side. Now he will buffet you unmercifully. Fasten your seat belts."

Both are distortions of the truth, which is this: Before you were a Christian, whole areas of your life were damaged because of the way you lived, as well as from world's system under the control of the enemy. Now that you have become a Christian, God brought you into His family, You now have the Holy Spirit within you to guide and teach and comfort you, your mind is being renewed and you are given power you to change your lifestyle. That is amazing news. And your changed life will save you from a lot of troubles.

But you will face some terrible conflicts ahead. Before you were a Christian, you just gave into the temptations and then suffered the consequences of your sins. Now as you begin to stand against those temptations, you are beginning to realize the real source of them -- Satan himself. This struggle against temptation and evil is not against people. It is against the unseen evil spiritual world of the demonic. But you can stand your ground when you equip yourself with the tools God has given you.

God has not left us alone and defenseless in the presence of the enemies, our sin nature, the lure of the world goods to make us complete. and the evil one, and his persistent attacks. He has provided us with what is called 'the armor of God', the weaponry needed to successfully wage war against sin, and our spiritual enemy ...while also being equipped to rescue human hostages out of the Kingdom of Darkness. The

description of weaponry the full armor of God is prefaced by this command:

EPH 6: 10 A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. NLT

So...*Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power*: Which means 'keep on being strengthened' (continuous), 'in the Lord' (identifying where the source of this strength is) 'and in mighty power' that, is, His supremacy and His incomparable personal power. **it is all about Position! And relationship**

God has vast reservoirs of power that can be realized in our Christian life. But His might does not work in me as I sit passively. His might works in me as I rely on it, and step out to do the work. I must Stand!

- The key is by faith rely on His might - and rely on it more and more - and then fight.

*****The armor of God that is about to be described has nothing to do with us and our ability:

¹¹ Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. *¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

- Remember the enemy operates outside our dimensions...he is a transcendent evil being ...we are mere earthlings. First understand this... so before Christ we could not overcome the strategies or methods of the enemy... we had not the mental capacity (intellect) to successfully battle him, nor the supernatural power to outwit his strategy's

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- So it is necessary for us, putting aside all confidence in ourselves, to put on *all* of the armor that God provides. God's weaponry !
- So that we do not leave one area of our lives exposed!
- Lets examine his strategy's
- His names give us a clue to his strategy.. **Devil" translates Greek *diabolos*** (we get the word "diabolical"): **"one who engages in slander,"** in Rev 12:10 he is call the accuser of us before God...he is called a liar and the Father of lies...liar in the New Testament the title of the principal transcendent evil being "the adversary, the devil." **His proper name Satan** (which is not used here) is a Hebrew word *satan* meaning "adversary," the enemy of God,

So he attacks our minds...slandering (manipulating) us against each other, Slandering God to us and us to God... and simply slandering us...he confuses us by lying to us, he is the originator of gaslighting...

Gaslighting is a form of psychological abuse manipulating a person or group making someone question their sanity, questioning their perception of reality, memories, beliefs. People experiencing this mental torment often feel confused, anxious, and unable to trust themselves, trust others...what is clearly evident were told is not.

- These lying deceptions make us feel hopeless, joyless, worthless, incompetent, **Causing anxiety, depression, and psychological trauma**...we make rash decisions based on misinterpreting circumstances, hurts, relational struggles.
- **All of this is designed to get us to respond in our sinful nature which always is demonstrated in destructive action toward ourselves, others ... it is the way of the world system he set up...**
- *Then this is what happens...*

Gal 5:¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division,²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. ie suicide, murder, rage, hate, gossip, slander...

we understand who he is and his schemes...methods...lie kill steal and destroy..

But he is not alone there are "Evil Rulers" and "Authorities" meaning officials, commanders representing the devil..." they are the overseers of large areas.. We see in a hint of this in Daniel 10:12-13,20 where Daniel relates an experience in which Michael the archangel was delayed in answering Daniel's prayer because of a battle with "the king or prince of the Persian kingdom."

"Powers of this dark world" is Greek kosmokratōr which means "world-ruler." But the world here is described as "darkness," in other words, Paul is describing here the " most powerful rulers of this sinful world." powers of the air...overseers

"Spiritual forces (of evil)" (Greek pneumatikos, "pertaining to the spirit, ...Paul is speaking here about beings.. spiritual beings of wickedness in the unseen but very real.

In our own power we are simply prey to them.

So Paul tells us again ...we need God's weaponry! we need this armor of God!

¹³ Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

- **"the full armor of God." This is simply a colorful way of saying**

that we have Jesus with us, and he is far greater than Satan ... In military strategy, perhaps one of the most basic of all rules is never to underestimate the enemy. we need the full armor!

- **Paul uses three words in this passage: PUT ONRESIST... ..STAND. ..you have territory to defend...defend it! Give not one inch!**
- **Paul does not instruct us to be agile or swift of foot. Paul tells us to "stand," a military term for holding on to a position. In effect, before one can launch an attack, he must first hold the position he is in.**
- **we are to stand on a firm foundation, as it were. We are to be securely grounded, rooted and unmoving.**
- **One Sunday I asked an elderly gentleman at church, "How are you?" and he replied, "I'm still vertical." **That's the idea. That is victory: to hold our ground, to stand our ground, not to give in, not to give up. To remain standing at the end of the conflict.****

One of the most valuable of all of these resources is the mindset that we will fight....before we can stand and resist....we must be willing to fight...willing to fight precedes How to fight!! that is what PUT ON means...****

Jesus has already dealt Satan a lethal blow on the cross, he will crush him completely when he returns—and he will protect us and push Satan back *through us* as we simply depend on him and appropriate what he has already given us.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

- **when the day of evil or attack comes....the Enemy spiritual forces methods are an attempt to wear us down, encourage us to fall, pressure us to retreat, demand we give up.**

But victory is to remain, to stand, to be left standing and holding our

territory at the end of the day.

I want to stop right here...before we get into the armor of God...we must first embrace the fight!

I call it Embrace "the suck." this situation sucks! but I am who I am...and I belong to who I belong too...so I will deal with this ...as Paul says in

Phil 1:27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

- Whatever the situation is --deal with it. And don't just deal with it-- open your arms and welcome it as you would an old friend. Why? because what I embrace I can deal with?

JN 16 33 I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.

So Why Did he not skip peace and take away trouble? Because it is in the trouble or tough times that character is forged...

John 16:1 "I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith.

- Since anything worthwhile is almost by definition something not obtained instantly or easily, many of us do not embrace the struggle to accomplishment aspect of following Jesus.
- In fact, most tools of instant gratification are destructive (drugs, alcohol, t.v., porn, food etc.)
- **If you have a habit of giving up when the going gets tough, don't expect to go too far.**

- **If your energy runs out during challenging times or during difficult assignments, or if you have a habit of being impatient and giving up, the proof will be in the pudding: maturity, victory and goals simply won't be accomplished.**
- **When promoting disciples, Jesus looks for individuals who have persevered during tough times, encouraged others to be their best, and have helped to our fellows.**

This is the depth of challenge that character formation requires. and Jesus leads us right into these challenges..the hardpart is following and learning..

- **Challenges that we spend most of our life trying to avoid eventually and inescapably will seek us out.**
- **We rarely get to choose the time and the place of the attack, our loss, our trials, our frustrations, lack of control, the setbacks of life... But it is in these we find that God is with us And he has given us the spiritual resources to deal with them.**

The next time you come to a really difficult time – embrace it!! Then try praying something, *"Lord, help me trust in your ability to work in this situation. I lift it up to you -- I give it to you -- and I pray for peace that your purposes will prevail in the end.*

And know this.... - a little faith is enough

LK 17:6 He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.

1. to trust God...and do what you need today it is enough to uproot...big issues... (a figure of speech) **The mulberry tree** is amazingly strong and tall up to 35 feet or more with an extensive root system. It was

supposed the tree could stand in the earth for six hundred years and ancient rabbis said the untangled roots would stretch out for 600 miles.

There are times when you and I do face deeply rooted issues in our lives we would dearly love to see removed, but these issues are like this kind of tree...tall, strong, strongly rooted, and deeply entangled...

They appear to need more than a little faith...but Jesus say it is enough if coupled with action... Mustard seed faith...a tiny seed of faith

➤ With action... *you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.*

1. one branch at a time ...the visible actions...outward life

2. one root at a time...the invisible inward life..

Do you have that mindset? You willing to do that?

Next week then we take up our weapons

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2 Cor 10:³ We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do.

*1 Peter 5: 8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. 9 Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are. **Stay Alert means mindfully in touch with reality.** There are times when we, as a soldier, are going to face adversity and hardship. There are going to be times of pain—physical, emotional and mental.*

- There are going to be times of sorrow that may lead us to depression or even bitterness.
- There will be occasions when we will be in fear and feel a great sense of insecurity.
- There are times we will win our battles, but other times we will lose and thus feel guilty and depressed.
- There are going to be times of obedience that give a feeling of exhilaration and of being in control, as well as times of disobedience when just the opposite will be the effect.
- There will also be times when we will be aware that God is disciplining us—sometimes in terms of consequence for sin and at other times in training to prepare us to master what we are doing.
- There will be times of sacrifice and even times of death and weeping
- Nevertheless, all of these are part and parcel of a soldier's life.
- **So...On the one hand, we are to be alert and ready.**
- Every day is a day of potential attack from an enemy that is vastly more powerful and intelligent and ruthless than any human terrorist. Our attitude should never be “if”—but only “when” and “how” he will attack.
- **And On the other hand, we should be confident.** We should not be afraid or intimidated, because we have all of the resources we need to

defeat every attack of Satan. we are not alone...one of his tactics is to make us feel alone in our battles

NIV 1 john 4:4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

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- **When you embrace the suck...you become Resilient ...Resilient people succeed because they don't get stuck in the Suck they overcome it by bouncing back...**

this is resilient...

[John 16:33](#) “I have told you these things, so that **in me** you may have peace. **In this world** you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the **world**.”

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- Jesus said there is going to be trouble the bounce back...I have overcome the world...you can have peace in turbulent times

[1 John 5:4](#) ...for everyone born of God **overcomes the world**. This is **the** victory that has **overcome the world**, even our faith.

Faith in what? [1 John 5:5](#) Who is it that **overcomes** the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

- **[So we must Practice what we Believe!](#) *Real faith knows no time when it is not exercised. and exercising faith in all times of life takes great resilience! that is the perspective we must view all things in our life...***
- the point here is only the person who has Jesus as the most influential person in their life is going to overcome the world...
 - Testing is God's way of blowing on the sails of our lives to position us to be testimonies of Him to a world that does not know it left hand from its right...

as God told Jonah...as God told Jonah embrace the suck of what I am doing ...for people need to hear your testimony...

[as he told Jonah](#) *Jonah 4:11* And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?”

[So what can you do to be resilient today?](#) call and check up with people....play games at home.....pray with and for others...

Jesus told his NT followers this...

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The God who began a good work in you is also the God who will complete that work...

*PHP 1: 6 being confident of this, **that he who began a good** work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

- so what that means is that is God who begins the work and is God who completes it...
- and it is not completed until the day we are complete in Jesus...with him on the day...

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This first item or God's armor is his truth.

Eph 6:14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist...

- The soldier's belt or girdle encircling his hips was the item of armor strapped on first; as well as protecting him, it supported much of his other armor and equipment. It was an indispensable

item. **Think of the wide belt that the weight lifter wears to protect and strengthen him.**

- Never assume that this item of armor refers simply to our sincerity or our telling the truth as opposed to telling lies. If we were dependent on these for our protection we would be in a sorry spot.
- No. It refers to God's truth, that is, the sum total of the truth that God has revealed in the written word (John 17:17).
- This truth - God's self-revelation - is what sustains, protects and directs us, and it is this truth that sets us free from the lies of the evil one .
- **Opposing this truth is the strategy of the evil one, and the practice of those he has duped, to suppress, corrupt and/or deny God's truth.**
- when we hold firmly to the truth that we know and seek diligently to acquire wisdom, we are protected. This is a good piece of equipment to put on in the morning with a regular reading of the Scriptures.

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

- **He fought the good fight...we all have a fight that is good for us.....what a good fight? the fight you don't lose however long it takes!! your still standing at the end!**
- **I have finished the race...we all have a race marked out for us..the key is finishing...we might come in crawling...we might have even taken a few detours or stops along the way...but finishing is the key**

- I have kept the faith...He kept his faith in Jesus sovereignty the whole time...the whole race...the whole fight..
- so the most important thing to keep with us the whole race and in the good fight is faith...

which makes sense because the first battle we will face in any battle or trial we encounter...is Fear!!

Fear is the enemy of faith and desires you to carry it!! Fear kills faith brings life

2 Corinthians 5:7 For we live by faith, not by sight

Fear lives in the realm of what you see! Faith lives in the realm of what you don't see..

Listen before you came to Christ ...or maybe even now some of you are thinking about it...what is it you face? fear...

You see...Beginning Faith is harder than no Faith

- fear of what will I become if I do this...fear of is it real...fear of giving up things...
- fear of losing your identity and becoming someone different...
- fear of being controlled...fear of is this another crutch in my life...
- fear of becoming like those obnoxious Christians you have seen or heard about...

and you know what? Continuing Faith is harder then beginning Faith

And you know what? finishing Faith is harder then continuing faith

The good news is...Our God knows what battles you are in and what you are enduring through them.....He has already scoped it out and has prepared you for it...and will equip in it...and bring you through it...and make you victorious after it!

1 Peter 4: 12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

- **Jesus suffering worked out perfect...yours will too...reject fear walk in Faith...**
- **but that is hard... Belief in God's invisible strategies often doesn't make sense to us...that is why it is called faith.**
- **If it all made sense it would be called logic. And God would call us to be a people of Logic!**
- **we are looking to fight a logical war...it is human nature to think in what we consider logically...at least most guys do..then we realize half the population live by feelings...then there are those who live for pleasure...those who live off others..etc.**
- **God wants us to fight a strategic war...in which he conceals most of the strategy from us...but one in which victory is assured ...our job is to fight the good fight of faith!**
- **I bet many of the disciples dreamed of walking on Water....but eleven thought it was illogical... Only one asked the Lord if he could...and then had the faith to do it in obedience to Jesus saying ok.**
- **Many Christ followers fail to move out of mediocrity in their lives ...because they will not operate in Faith in God but depend on the logic of their flawed thinking...**

- **God told Abraham to go to a land he had never seen nor knew what in what direction, God simply said GO and when you get there I will let you know...he went by faith**
- **God told Moses to command Pharaoh to let the people go knowing that Pharaoh's response would be no ten times...highly illogical...since God could have willed it to be done, the first time..but Moses kept going back by faith...He won the battle of perseverance**
- **Elijah called down fire from heaven when he had never seen fire before called down before.....**
- **Joshua started His military campaign marching around a fortified city named Jericho for seven days singing. Hardly a juggernaut of military logistical strategy.**
- **You may be thinking I could never be like these guys...think again...they all struggled in their personal walks with faith...in fact**
- **The difference between Uncle Sam and Jesus Christ in building his army ..is that Uncle Sam won't enlist you in his service unless you are healthy and Jesus won't enlist you unless you are sick.**

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2 Peter 1:10-15

NLT 2PE 1:10 So, dear brothers and sisters,^[c] work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. ¹¹ Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2PE 1:12 Therefore, I will always remind you about these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught. ¹³ And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as

long as I live.^[d] ¹⁴ For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life,^[e] ¹⁵ so I will work hard to make sure you always remember these things after I am gone.

This is what He reminded them...

2PE 1: By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. ⁴ And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

2PE 1:5 In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

⁸ The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

Bottom Line...Love God, love yourself, Love others which can only be done as the power of God...Father Son and Holy Spirit...control our lives...

RO 8: 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

- This is the Holy Spirit of Promise ...the promise Jesus made in.. The seal will be made evident as the Spirit works in us to produce Spiritual fruit...which will manifest in the earthly realm...

...people will be able to see the seal...they will be able to see the fruit of the Spirit in your life...

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

- We gain spiritual power to overcome our fleshly passions and desires...

Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

because the Holy Spirit gives gifts spiritual power and gifts....and produces fruit in our lives ...which cannot be produced without him!!

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the

flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

- **You know what this means?**
 - **It means we can only overcome the passions and desires that war against us by the power of the Holy Spirit....**
 - **Two since we have a spiritual enemy who wars against us ..we now have the power to overcome him....**
 - **And It means the Devil has none of these qualities!**
 - **which means ...these are probably our best weapons against him!!**
 - **He has no patience...when you are patient...you will outlast him**
 - **He has no love...when you love he can't take it!!**
 - **In Fact Love is our major weapon!!...**
- 1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.*
- **love is to powerful for Him..it is of God!!**
 - **even gifts will go...but love never fails!!**
 - **He has no self control...and tries to talk you out of it too! that's how you know it is him...his way is always indulge!**
 - **He has no Joy! that is why Joy is our strength...He loves misery and tries to get us to indulge**
 - **He is not kind, good or faithful...these defeat his intentions...**
 - **That is what resisting the devil is all about..**
 - **the fruit has nothing to do with law or rules...it has to do with relationship with the Holy Spirit!!**
 - **Our submitting to him...growing fruit...is our resistance to the devil and he will flee**

End

God loved and He gave...we believe and receive...

1 John 5:4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

We are more than conquerors of anything the enemy throw at us...

Romans 8:37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

And we have the Holy Spirit who has been given to overcome all the attacks of the enemy!!
The Holy Spirit is overwhelming Firepower...

what do we do in the battles...we learn to stand in our position and throw Holy Spirit fruit at the enemy!!

1. in our battles we learn..to pray through doubt until we hit faith
2. in our battles we learn...to overcome evil with good..
3. in our battles we learn...to persevere, and keep on marching
4. in our battles we learn...to be strong in Him..not in our selves
5. in our battles we learn...to stand firm..when we want to quit
6. in our battles we learn...to be victorious through prayer air strikes..
7. in our battles we learn...to war against that which wars against us
8. in our battles we learn...to walk out our talk
9. in our battles we learn... to grow in compassion for others who are struggling in their own battles
10. in our battles we learn..to conquer that which previously conquered us..fears, substances, pride...

11. in our battles we learn...to trust the character of God, when we don't understand his ways
12. in our battles we learn...that we will win!
13. So we can and should run to our humble God when in need...
14. In our battles we to to cry out for more of the Holy Spirit!!

You may suffered setbacks of every kind...these aren't setbacks...there regrouping...

- Our disappointments are instructional
- Our failures were not final...Merely stop signs... delays and obstacles...
- And that they will prove to be strategically necessary!!
- For through them they would learn some of life's greatest war weapons... such as Faith, patience perseverance and hope...long suffering
- We come to see defeats as the avenue for change in direction...

Be the last person standing in your battles...

Eph 6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

- What does verse 13 mean....[To stand means to confront from a position...stand in your higher ground and fight from there...](#)
- [we have the high ground...the greater position and therefore the greater power..](#)
- [James 4:7](#) Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
- Stand and he will run...

Why does he call these kinds of people? ...simple...because they know they are messed up... their lives often messy...

Matthew 9:⁹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰ Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. ¹¹ But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum?" ¹² When Jesus heard this, he said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do." ¹³ Then he added, "Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer

sacrifices. **'For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.'**

- One thing to note...they were all sick...some just did not know it...and actually thought they were well.
- the Pharisees were the sickest they just did not recognize it...much like a person who has cancer but does not recognize it until it is in its fourth stage...none the less they have been sick for quite a while.
- the others know they are sick..and our waiting for help...a doctor...
Now once you are called...You are challenged to change.. How? - by following

It is a mistake to romanticize the following of God...it is not the same as falling into your dream career....i want to bring reality to you...we need to understand that difficulty and pressure are par for the course for those who choose to follow Jesus. there is no amount of Bible study, weekend retreats, super living seminars, deeper life conferences, "miracle today" Christian television shows, or gospel youtube programs...that will exempt you from struggle and trials....

No where in the scripture does it say Jesus calls us to a safe place with easy timesThere are no promises from God in the Bible that He will place a bubble of protection around you in this life... ask people like Hannah, Job, Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, Esther, Samson, David, Daniel, Peter or Paul...

Jesus said it plainly to his disciples whom had already been called and have been following Jesus ...He told of his pending death, the soon to be resurrection...trials they would experience because of following Jesus...

John 16:2 For you will be expelled from the synagogues, and the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God

- **thrown out of the synagogue... where they had their identity as jews would ...they would be rejected sometimes unto death.**

- **their old way of life and careers would change ...tax collecting, fishing, business...and all would eventually die following the long line of God followers**

- **Were told this about the whole group of believers in the Old Testament**

Hebrews 11:13 All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth.

¹⁴ Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own.

What did they hold on to...1)they were anticipating a country (the new earth) that would be a perfect home. 2)So they were not going back where they came from...2)they knew that they were being led to a better place...a heavenly homeland 3)they knew God was pleased with them preparing a city for them...

Hebrews 11:14 Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own.¹⁵ If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. ¹⁶ But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Jesus told his NT followers this...

JN 16 33 I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

- **I have a thought...Jesus why don't we just skip the peace in you and and focus in the taking away the many trials and sorrows part?**

So Why Did he not skip peace and take away trouble? Because it is in the trouble or tough times that character is forged...

John 16:1 "I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith.

- Since anything worthwhile is almost by definition something not obtained instantly or easily, many of us do not embrace the struggle to accomplishment aspect of following Jesus.
- In fact, most tools of instant gratification are destructive (drugs, alcohol, t.v., porn, food etc.)
- **If you have a habit of giving up when the going gets tough, don't expect to go too far.**
- **If your energy runs out during challenging times or during difficult assignments, or if you have a habit of being impatient and giving up, the proof will be in the pudding: maturity, victory and goals simply won't be accomplished.**
- **When promoting disciples, Jesus looks for individuals who have persevered during tough times, encouraged others to be their best, and have helped to our fellows.**

This is the depth of challenge that character formation requires. and Jesus leads us right into these challenges..the hardpar is following and learning..

- Challenges that we spend most of our life trying to avoid eventually and inescapably will seek us out.
- We rarely get to choose the time and the place of our loss, our trials, our frustrations, lack of control, the setbacks of life... But it is in these we find that God is with us And he has given us the spiritual resources to deal with them.

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- The next time you come to a really difficult time -- try praying something, *"Lord, help me trust in your ability to work in this situation. I lift it up to you -- I give it to you -- and I pray for peace that your purposes will prevail in the end."*

And Jesus' answer....

LK 17:6 He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."

Jesus' response in verses 6- a little faith is enough

2. it is enough to trust God... it is enough to serve God ...it is enough to obey him

it is enough to uproot...big issues... (a figure of speech) **The mulberry tree is amazingly strong and tall up to 35 feet or more with an extensive root system. It was supposed the tree could stand in the earth for six hundred years and ancient rabbis said the untangled roots would stretch out for 600 miles.**

There are times when you and I do face deeply rooted issues in our lives we would dearly love to see removed, but these issues are like this kind of tree...tall, strong, strongly rooted, and deeply entangled...

They appear to need more than a little faith...but Jesus say it is enough if coupled with action... Mustard seed faith...a tiny seed of faith

- With action... *you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.*

Let's examine his demands to those who follow him..... the disciples were not to be the bearer of Christ's message, but to be the message."

1. one branch at a time ...the visible actions...outward life
2. one root at a time...the invisible inward life..

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The God who began a good work in you is also the God who will complete that work...

*PHP 1: 6 being confident of this, **that he who began a good** work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

- so what that means is that is God who begins the work and is God who completes it...
- and it is not completed until the day we are complete in Jesus...with him on the day...

Two men Christ tells us went to the temple to pray. Both realized their need to take themselves before God in prayer. But one was really a boast...

LK 18:9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'
"Confident of their own righteousness" — a terribly misplaced confidence.

- they were two very different men. The Pharisee, we're told, "stood up." The tax collector, we're told, "wouldn't even look up."
- The one man was a pillar of his profession while the other was reviled *because of his profession.*
- One stood with confidence, the other, stood and cowered in a corner. The one prayed about himself, congratulating himself before God, for *all the things he wasn't.* The other, agonized and literally beat himself up for *the one thing that he was.*
- This Pharisee thought he was righteous... he thought he was living in harmony with God
- We are warned about being both righteous *and* living with the belief that all others are unworthy. It's an easy trap to fall into and in this we have the sudden reversal.
- The misfortunes that befell the "some" that Jesus was speaking to, is what happened to the Pharisee as he prayed.
- **His prayer was about how good he is... and his the confidence of his position in life and his outlook on life...he did life right saw life right judged life right...he was wrong on all counts**
- **He believed his view was the same as God's view...regarding himself and his take on others...he was wrong on both counts**

Nowhere in scripture are we taught that when we compare ourselves with others?

- That just because we are not obvious wrongdoers, we are somehow better than everyone else?

- **Does this sound like the prayer of someone who is meant to further the good of humanity? Does it sound like someone that is in the world, yet, not of the world? This was the distinct attitude in prayer of someone who may have followed their calling with the greatest of intentions, yet, has become too caught up in their own righteousness.**
- **He has withdrawn from the very world in which they expected they would make a difference; and worse, they've come to believe that the world is not good enough for them.**
- **They have become like the doctor that looks with disdain at those who come to them for help; or the paramedic that looks on the injured patient as one that should have known better.**
- **This is also a big danger for established Christians. •• As we mature in our walk with the Lord, a gap can develop in our minds: "good" (us)... "bad" (them).**

• *That was the mistake of the fasting tither, who said, "I thank you that I am not like other men." For we are all like other men...for we are all human ...*

When you start to Judge your Christianity or others...by outward appearances ...I fail ...For No matter how good I consider my acts of good works as a measuring stick of my standing before God...I fail to make a passing grade ...and will be humbled

- **The one who knows their best work on their best day...fails to gain a greater standing before God...gets it. And therefore asks for mercy and receives it.**
- **Now I am not talking about rewards for doing good works because that is something different...and we will be rewarded for those things. I am talking about standing before God as accepted as we are as flawed people.**
- **This is very comforting ...but there is also something disturbing in this story...**
- **And it is this...**

How can someone who does good things be so off on their judgement of their own spiritual standing before God and so far off of their spiritual standing before God?

- **Because Life is full of loops, lapses, hurrahs and heartaches, gains and loses victories and defeats....Reality is at times depressing to those who are in touch with reality."**

To look at life in the terms of a nature hike... life is not a straight climb, more like a crooked path, filled with thorns and birds and snakes and beautiful meadows and dark forests, waste lands and wonderlands...and we are all prone to losing our way!!

The goal of God is progressive Deep spiritual growth as we near our destination... and it is far from a super highway; deep spiritual growth is more like a dirt path through a thick jungle.”

To look at life through biblical human examples...at any point along the journey...We can have times like the Apstotles:

being John the beloved and then a son of thunder a man who wanted to call down fir to destroy people who gave him a little rejection.....,... Peter the coward yet the leader of the twelve apostles... Job enduring unbearable suffering under the hand of God who bragged on him, ...Rahab the immoral and Rahab the noble, Noah the righteous and Noah the drunk,... the saved Lot and the compromising Lot... Mary Magdalene the demonically oppressed and Mary Magdalene the beloved of Jesus,... Thomas the Apostle of Jesus and Thomas the doubting,... Paul the self righteous murdering Pharisee and Paul the Apostle Jacob the overcomer and Jacob the lying conniver, ...Samson the Judge defender of the faith and Samson the violent backslider, Jonah the prophet and Jonah the disobedient, Elijah the powerful and Elijah the depressed and disillusioned,...David the adulter murderer...And David the king and man after God’s own heart,... Joseph the falsely accused and imprisoned and Joseph the overcomer, Martha the workaholic,...or Mary the learner, Lazarus the dead and Lazarus the resurrected, ...Their were the Healed who are grateful and thankful and the thankless but still healed...and those who were not healed at all... Mary the beloved Mother of Jesus enduring her pierced and wounded heart...who lost both her husband and her son and actually watched her son be murdered ...and Jesus himself the God man rejected and familiar with sorrow... and on and on and on... ..you get the picture..

and Yet all were chosen and called by God to be His very own... with Scripture describing these and others in glowing terms such as the world was not worthy of them, they were more than conquers, they were faithful, righteous, finished the race...people after God’s own heart, humble and beloved... And the reason God speaks of these people this way is because he see the whole picture of a persons life, inside and out.....where as you and I usually see snippets.....and often times just what we can observe...and even observations are incomplete...for we don’t know the motivations, the history the story of most people.

Back to First John 2:9-11

*1JN 2:9 Anyone who claims **to be in the light** but hates his brother is still in the darkness. ¹⁰*

Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.

¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.