

Getting Through the Hard Times, Part 1

Seven Strategies for Winning

Someone said, "God never promised you a rose garden." This is true. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that once we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior, everything is going to be rosy. In fact, quite the opposite. Jesus warned us that just as He suffered at the hands of men, we will too.

John 15:18-20 [Jesus speaking] *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also."* (See also Matthew 10:16-26)

In other words, expect people to treat us the same way they treat Christ. Whatever they will do to Him, they will do to us. If they honor Him, they will honor us; and if they hate Him, they will also be hateful to us.

Jesus warned us. Suffering by persecution is part of the Christian walk. Then why are we so amazed when it happens? For example, when someone at work secretly slanders you, or you are passed over for promotion because of your Christian witness, or because you love Jesus with all your heart, and you are not afraid to show it? Why are we so amazed? Jesus said if it happened to Him, it will happen to us, too.

We in the USA don't like to talk about suffering as part of the Christian walk. Yet it is clear in Scripture that persecution is to be expected. Look at what Paul says to the Philippians,

Philippians 1:29 *for to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.*

Peter continues with this theme, saying, since when do you think that something strange is happening to you?

1 Peter 4:12 *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.*

Nevertheless, even though we are warned about the hard times, we know this, that we can overcome every evil thing through Jesus Christ!

John 16:33 [Jesus speaking] *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; **but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.**"*

No matter what we go through, **God wants us to win!** We are more than conquerors through Christ who loves us! It helps, though, to realize that **we are in a war, and God is on our side.** So here is a battle plan for every person going through a hard time:

Seven strategies for winning

1. **Realize that no matter what you go through, God will NEVER leave you, God loves you, and God wants you to win!**

God will never leave you,

Hebrews 13:5 ...*For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

The fact that we will never be alone is one of the precious promises that God gave to other men and women who believed on Him through their trials and hard times. He says the same thing to us today: God will never leave us!

God loves you. NOTHING can separate you from the love of God,

Romans 8:38-39 *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor thing to come nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

God wants you to win!

Romans 8:37 ***Yet in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.***

Luke 12:32 [Jesus speaking] ***"Do not fear, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."***

2. **Realize that you may not have had a choice in what happened to you, but you will always have a choice in how to respond to it.** If you will listen, God will guide you through even the toughest places. But you have to be willing to listen.

Psalm 23:1-4 *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters, He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

When you go through a difficult time, you may feel like you are in "the valley of the shadow of death." What is the best way to negotiate such a dark place? Isn't it to listen to the Shepherd? Allow God to lead you and speak to you. Allow Him to show you "the paths of righteousness, for His name's sake." If you listen, He will. He promises that He will teach you, instruct you and guide you in the way you

should go. Listen to Him. How to listen? Be willing to spend the time—in fact, more time than ever—in prayer and bible study. He said, “*My sheep hear My voice,*” John 10:3, 16, 27. The Bible, which is God’s word, is His voice. If you are reading and praying, He promises to guide you,

*Psalm 32:7-8 You are my hiding place. You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. **I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.***

3. Realize that you are in a battle, and you have two enemies.

a. The first enemy you face is Satan, who Jesus said is the ruler of this world,

John 12:31 [Jesus speaking] “*Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*”

John 14:30 [Jesus speaking] “*I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.*”

John 16:8-11 [Jesus speaking] “*And when He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*”

Never believe the lie that Satan tells people: that God is the one who causes calamities, suffering and hardship. God created this world through Jesus Christ, (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17). But Satan is the ruler of this world. Every evil under the sun comes from him, not from God. Jesus clearly tells us,

John 10:10 [Jesus speaking] “***The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.***”

Look at the character of Satan. He is a liar and the father of lies:

John 8:43-44 [Jesus speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, John 8:3] “*Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, **because there is no truth in him.** When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, **for he is a liar and the father of lies.***”

Compare what Jesus says about Satan to our Father’s character. God is good and never evil. Nor is He the author of evil,

James 1:13, 17 *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for **God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He himself tempt anyone**....¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from **the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.**"*

b. Your second enemy is your self.

The verses in the book of James which talk about our Father's goodness, also talk about our own battle with temptation,

James 1:13-16 *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires, and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. ¹⁶ *Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.**

We are in a battle. We have two enemies. The first enemy is Satan, who is the ruler of this world, and who desires us to continue to be part of this world culture, whether we are saved or not. The second enemy each of us has is our own self. These enemies can win if we if we allow them to win. **But we don't have to allow them to win!**

4. Prepare for war. Ask God to show you any sin in your life, forgive you, and cleanse you. He will forgive you, but you have to ask. Also, cleanse your home.

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Once you have done this, continue in the Lord. Praise Him, worship Him, read Scripture out loud. Also, flee the opportunity to sin. Remember this verse that has helped so many, the "Run, Jack, run!" verse in the bible,

2 Timothy 2:22 *Flee also youthful lusts, but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

Paul instructs us also, make no provision for the flesh!

Romans 13:14 *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts.*

"No provision" means no provision—**get rid of anything that has caused you to sin in the past**—or at the very least, get rid of that part of it. This may mean throwing out movies, or deleting website addresses. It may also mean you need to go through your home and cleanse it of anything that is displeasing to the Lord. For

example, anything to do with the occult, witchcraft or other religions is a curse, Deuteronomy 18:10-13. Pornography should NEVER be part of any Christian's life! I Thessalonians 4:3-4. Ask God to guide you, pray about items in your home. If possible, destroy ungodly items, as other Christians did in Acts 19:19. Get them out of your home! Then pray through your home. May I suggest? Get a little bit of olive oil and pray over it, asking the Holy Spirit to use it to bless and cleanse your home. Then starting near the front door, but not touching the door yet, go either right or left through your home, and touch every wall, window and door. Go through closets and every place, let there be no place that is not prayed over. As you go, ask for God to cover and cleanse everything you touch with the blood of Jesus Christ. Plead the blood of Jesus on every part. When you get back to your front door, first open the door and command every demon spirit to leave your home, James 4:8. Then anoint the front door as well—the top and both sides--and ask for the blood of Jesus to cover and cleanse it as well. You may also want to sprinkle your property outside. You will notice a big difference in the atmosphere of your home. Also do this again regularly, because things creep in over time. Plan on doing this spiritual cleansing at least once every three months, more often if people are being prayed over in your home and leaving demons behind.

5. Go to battle. Realize that you have mighty weapons for warfare.

a. The Name of JESUS is a weapon of warfare.

Psalm 50:15 [God speaking] *“Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”*

Proverbs 18:10 *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.*

Romans 10:13 *For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

Joel 2:32 *And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls.*

In every battle you face in life, **call on Jesus' holy name. Say it out loud.** Ask Him to come and help you. He will.

b. In Jesus' name, you have the power to resist the enemy and tell him to flee! Do this out loud in Jesus' name.

James 4:7-8, 10 *7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you...10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*

Notice that there are actually four steps to spiritual warfare in this passage,

- 1) *“Submit to God.”* We submit to God by confessing any sin He shows us, and asking Him to forgive us and cleanse us. (In this passage, for example, the sin was covetousness and fighting in the church, and the root sin was pride, see James 4:1-5)
- 2) *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* Resist by telling the enemy to flee, in Jesus’ name. Be as specific as you can be. For example, “You demon spirit tempting me to _____, I resist you now, in Jesus’ name, and I command you to flee!”
- 3) *“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”* Draw near to God, for example, by praising Him, worshiping Him, reading scripture, meditating on scripture, or quoting scripture out loud.
- 4) *“Humble yourself,”* What was the sin God convicted you of, or the enemy was trying to tempt you with? Then humble yourself and do the opposite of this sin. In this passage, the root sin was pride, v. 5. James is telling the people to do the opposite, in this case, to humble themselves. We can do the same.

c. The blood of Jesus was given to heal you, cleanse you, deliver you and set you free. Jesus’ blood also protects you. He is your shield. Ask for the blood of Jesus to cover you and all your family, your fields, borders and interests, and everything that concerns you. Do this every day.

d. Break the curses and ungodly judgments against you in Jesus’ name. For a study on curses, look at Proverbs 11:9; 12:6 and 14:3 and Isaiah 58:9 (b). Curses come when people speak negative things about another person, but they can be broken, according to these Proverbs, by knowing about them and speaking against them out loud. Do this in Jesus’ name, because our authority is always in His name, Philippians 2:10. Say something like, “In the name of Jesus, I break every curse and ungodly judgment against me and my family.” Then pray for blessings to come on you instead. Do this every day.

- 6. A sixth strategy for winning the battle: Die to self.** We have two enemies, one of them is satan. The second enemy is our own self. There are some spiritual battles where the fastest way to win is to die to self. This can be tough, but remember our example is Jesus, who died for us. Most often, these situations occur when we are struggling to forgive someone. If that is the case, do this: 1) Choose to forgive; 2) Give the situation to God; 3) Pray blessings on the person who hurt you; 4) Ask God to cover everything that was said and done with the blood of Jesus, and to heal your heart and take the pain away; 5) Choose to die to self.

How do you die to self? Declare out loud that you are choosing to crucify your flesh with all its passions and desires, Galatians 5:24, and in particular, you are dying to this situation. Give the situation to the Lord, and then declare that it belongs to the Lord, and you are not going to talk about it or even think about it. Then, every time the thoughts come back, resist the thoughts—and every demon behind them—out loud in Jesus’ name. Then continue to pray blessings on the situation. Remind yourself, this is God’s. Thank Him that He is handling it.

7. A seventh strategy for winning the battle: Pray every day. A suggested pattern is this: **3 C's, 2 D's, and L-O-T,**

1. **Be Clean.** God will not hear the prayer of a person who is in sin, with one exception, God always hears the prayer of repentance, (1 John 1:9). See Ps. 66:18; Prov. 15:29; 28:9; Isaiah 1:15; 59:2-3; Micah 3:1-4; John 9:31; James 4:3. Pray for God to forgive you and cleanse you. Scripture which you can use to pray for a clean heart, Psalms 139:23-24; 19:12-14; 141:3-10; 51 (all), 1 John 1:9
2. **Be Covered with the blood of Jesus Christ.** The blood of Jesus Christ is one of three bases for effective warfare in Rev. 12:11 (the other two are the word of God and diligent persistence). In Job 1:5, 8-10, the hedge of protection is linked to Job's regular sacrifice. This represents our sacrifice, Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 5:21. In Exod. 12:3-7, 12-13 observe that the blood had to be applied! Similarly, it is our duty as priests of our homes to apply the blood of Jesus to our families, fields, borders, interests, ministries and everything that concerns us.
3. **Break Curses and ungodly judgments against you and your family.** Curses and ungodly judgments are negative statements made about someone. They have power, Prov. 18:21. Curses are related to a spirit of oppression Is. 58:9(b): *If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk.* (NIV) See also Is. 17:9-12; 10:7-8; 12:3-5; 55:3, 9-11. Curses are broken by speaking against them in the name of Jesus Christ, Phil. 2:9-11; Revelation 12:11; Proverbs 11:9; 12:6; 14:3. Do this out loud. See the box below.
4. **Declare victory over the enemy.** Take the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, and declare victory over all the power of the enemy. Do this in Jesus' name.

Sample Declaration: "In the name of Jesus Christ, I break all curses, word curses and unrighteous judgments against me, my family, home, and household. I declare that snakes, scorpions and all the power of the enemy against us are null and void, dust and chaff, with the glory of God sweeping them away. I declare that no weapon formed against me or my family shall prosper, and nothing by any means will harm us. I declare that those who seek our souls to destroy us are going into the lower parts of the earth, they are falling by sword and they are a portion for foxes. They may not return, and the mouths of those who speak lies against us are stopped. Luke 10:19, 11:23; Ps. 83:13-15; Is. 54:17; Ps. 63:9-11

5. **Declare blessings.** For example, Psalm 18:1-3 *I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer...*
Psalm 68:1-3 *Let God arise and His enemies be scattered!*
6. **Listen to the Lord.** Ask Him who to pray for, and how. Ps. 108:13; 144:1.
7. **Obey the Lord, follow Him.** Jesus told us to follow Him, John 12:26. This is the basis of effective prayer. Listen to Him and follow Him, always.
See Joshua 5:13-14; Luke 9:23; John 12:26; Romans 8:14; Psalm 32:7-9.
8. **Thank the Lord and worship Him.** Always thank your Father, and worship Him before you leave the place of prayer.