

“I Still Believe” The Books of 1st & 2nd Corinthians

It's easy to believe when things are going well, but what about when the wheels of our lives come off and everything spins out of control leaving us wrecked, hurting & feeling alone? **Where is our belief, our faith, then?**

On Thursday, my wife & I had a date night at the “I Still Believe” Jeremy Camp concert! It was a reenactment of a date night we had 20 years ago!

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Jeremy Camp's first album, titled “I Still Believe.” **It was an album born out of a time of immense pain & loss!**

He got married in Oct. of 2000, & his wife died of cancer 4 months later in Feb. of 2001. What effect does something like that have on a person's faith?

What would our response to God be if Jeremy Camp's story was our story?

C.S. Lewis wrote these words after losing his wife, **“I don't think I'm in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not ‘So there is no God after all’, but ‘So this is what God is really like.’”**

Have we ever come face to face with really hard questions about God? Like, **“Why would a good, & all-powerful, God allow such suffering in our lives?”**

The Apostle Paul meets us in that place of addressing such inquiries, in his letters to the church at Corinth. **If anyone understood suffering & hardship, it was Paul, but his response to it reveals an incredible depth of faith!**

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 - Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night & a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

It almost sounds like he is boasting in his sufferings... **that's because he is!**
“If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.” – vs. 30

Why would Paul boast about such things - his weaknesses/sufferings?

2 Corinthians 12:10 - “I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me. For the sake of Christ, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, & calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

The very power of God is ours, when in our weakness we turn to Him!
“My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness!”

This is why Spurgeon said, **“Anything is a blessing that makes us pray!”**
What's on our prayer lists? Do we see those things as blessings from God?

The Apostle Paul did! In his correspondence with the Corinthians, he shared how he was suffering with something that he prayed about again & again!

2 Corinthians 12:7-8 - “A thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.”

What was this thorn in Paul's flesh? Physical, Spiritual, Emotional, etc.???
It's not as important that we know what it was, as much as we know the purpose it served in Paul's life, & the purpose thorns serve in our lives too!

Sufferings, hardships, loss, etc. **They exist to point us to the God of all mercies, whose strength can meet us in our place of need, & whose purpose can bring about the ultimate good of God's glory and the blessing of others!**

Jeremy Camp's thorn was the loss of his wife! But it was through that experience that he wrote God glorifying, & faith enhancing songs! Such as...

- **“I Still Believe” - “I still believe in Your faithfulness... Even when I don't see, I still believe!”** Like Paul, who said – **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**
- **“Walk by Faith” - “I will walk by faith, even when I cannot see! It's because this broken road prepares Your will for me!”** **2 Corinthians 5:7**
- **“Right Here” - “Everywhere I go I know You're not far away. You're right here, You're right here!”** **2 Corinthians 12:9** - God's ever-present reality

We all will experience thorns in our lives here on earth, that we may ask God to spare us from, but **God instead will choose to have us endure!**

We don't have to know all the reasons why. All we need to know is that His grace is sufficient & that in our weakness/sufferings He will be our strength!

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