

Don't Run From Your Giants

Most of us would do anything to avoid life's trials. But God always brings good out of the hard times we endure.

☒ Know this: There will always be an opposition to your mission. Whenever you step out and begin to walk in obedience to God, there is going to be some kind of opposition from the devil. As soon as Jesus was baptized by John, He had to face temptation in the wilderness (see Matt. 4:1; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1).

Your opposition and adversity will take different forms at different times. Today you may be facing a health problem. Last year you may have been in a financial bind. Two years ago perhaps you lost your job.

Later on you might have a lot of trouble with your teenager or conflict in your marriage or a difficult relationship with someone on the job. Sometimes your opposition is discouragement, sleepless nights or the stress of having too much to do.

God never promised that you were going to float along on this journey of life, smelling roses and never having another problem from the day you were saved. He did promise, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you" (Is. 43:2, NKJV).

Get it through your head that trials, tests and all kinds of difficulties are inevitable. God will allow as many of them as you can handle, and He always knows how much you can handle. Your part is to decide now that you are going all the way with Him, regardless of how much it hurts.

Usually, by the time you realize what's happening, it's too late to turn back anyway. You can be sure that He will train you and strengthen you every step of the way because He wants

you to be able to take every step in 100 percent faith. Always remember that it is the devil who brings the temptations, but God brings the tests. It's all for your benefit. It's all for your growth.

The devil brings temptations to drive you away from God, but God will help you resist them, and He will manage to convert those temptations into soul-strengtheners. They become opportunities for your growth.

God brings you into tests and trials, and they may seem counterproductive at first. But He's doing it because He loves you, so you can be pruned and shaped as you grow closer to Him.

Paul said it like this: "Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us" (2 Cor. 1:9-10).

Paul wanted you to know that even though you may feel as if you are facing death right now, if you just keep standing, God will deliver!

Giants in the Land

When the 12 spies came back to report to Moses about the promised land, the fearful ones reported that there were giants in the land (see Num. 13:32-33). Their report was enough to deter the people from making the effort to take the land that had been promised to them by God.

Is your promised land occupied by giants at the moment? Do they have names such as "insecurity," "insignificance," "unemployment," "deficiency," "sickness"? Who could possibly conquer territory that's being held by giants? Are you tempted, like the Israelites, to hold back and stay safe?

You should know that if you do that, your giants will only get bigger. They're not going anywhere unless God drives them out with His mighty right hand.

As a matter of fact, those giants are supposed to be there. They are letting you know you are about to come into your greatness and into your promised land—if you will stand up and fight.

Some of us started out fighting. But then we started looking at the problems. We started looking at the giants. Stop looking at the giants, and start looking at God. He's bigger.

God wants to show you, both by helping you through hardships and by delivering you from them, how powerful and faithful and loving He is. He is the lily of the valleys (see Song. 2:1). But how will you know that He is the lily if you don't have any valleys?

He is the "Bright and Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16). But how will you know He is shining so brightly if you have never encountered any darkness?

He is the deliverer. But in order to deliver you, God has to have some kind of tribulation to deliver you from! He is the healer. But how will you know that He is the healer if you don't ever experience His healing touch?

Opposition and adversity, even the fiercest kinds, are never completely bad. In fact, God always turns around what seems to be meant for evil into something good (see Rom. 8:28).

It's always worth it. You can say that with two black eyes. You can whisper it with bleeding tonsils. You can give thanks from the bottom of a pit.

And even if, like John, you have been thrown into hot, boiling oil and then left for dead on some remote island, it is there that you will receive your greatest revelation (see Rev. 1:9).

What are some of the good things that God will bring out of our difficulties?

Good training. Hard times provide us with training. In order to become mature, we need to be trained. We need to get past our tendency to whine and complain about how unfair it all is. We need to get on with the business at hand, learning to respond quickly and obediently to whatever God sends into our lives.

As Joseph Garlington says, sometimes God will say to us: "OK. This is first grade." If we say back to God, "What if I don't like first grade?" He will say, "Then you get to repeat it." I don't know about you, but I want to learn my lessons, learn them well and move on.

The Israelites may never have learned this lesson, although we can learn from their mistakes: "They said to Moses, 'Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?'" (Ex. 14:11).

Moses responded to them: "'Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today.' ... The Lord said to Moses, 'Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward'" (Ex. 14:13,15).

In other words, the people of Israel had to stop their pointless complaining and obey what God already had told them to do. The Red Sea parted, and they escaped from the Egyptians. When they stopped complaining and followed orders, their dire straits turned into a wonderful deliverance.

In their case, this lesson didn't stick with them. Forty years later, they were still whining (see Num. 20). Sad to say, such lessons don't always stick with us either. But maturity-training is still one of the best reasons for having trials. It's as if God has put all of us into His heavenly boot camp. Our latest trials are part of the training process.

Isaiah 30:20 encourages us to believe that “though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers.”

Good opportunities. For Christians, adversities turn into opportunities. Hardships give us opportunities to walk in our authority in Christ Jesus (and, putting it the other way around, they give us fresh opportunities to see God’s authority at work).

When the devil tries to bury you in bad stuff, that’s when you have the chance to bury him deeper than he could ever bury you. As you lean on God’s promises and proclaim His faithfulness, you become an overcomer.

The greatest opportunities for victory arise out of the hardest trials. It’s enough to make you want to shout His praises for not sparing you!

I’m glad God allows me the chance to exercise my authority in Christ. He wants me to participate with Him in ruling in the kingdom. That can’t happen if He just lets me keep “sitting pretty,” free from trials and tribulations.

Obvious grace. Unfair circumstances, unfriendly accusations and ill health provide us with a perfect opportunity to manifest the grace of God. When we are presented with challenging situations, we cannot escape unless we lean hard on His grace.

Remember what Paul wrote to the Corinthians? He told them that they had been saved so that the life of Jesus could be manifested in their bodies (see 2 Cor. 4:10). In other words, while they were still here on the earth in their weak bodies, they were supposed to show forth the glory of God—in the midst of and because of their adversities.

Next time that jealous neighbor of yours becomes a mudslinger,

watch God work in you and through you as you respond in wisdom and love. The experience may not be much fun, but you can expect God's grace to supply you with the right attitude and the right words.

Next time you can't sleep at night, ask for His patience and perspective. Next time you hurt all over and your boss tells you to work late, receive God's help to persevere—with joy.

The 20th century Scottish minister Oswald Chambers said, "You did not do anything to achieve your salvation, but you must do something to exhibit it. You must 'work out your own salvation,' which God has worked in you already" (Phil. 2:12). The adversities God allows in your life allow you to demonstrate His grace.

Good motivation. Without some compelling reason, most of us prefer to sit tight and hope for the best. We don't want to dive into the fray where we might get hurt.

But God loves us too much to let us commit the "sin" of satisfaction. He wants us to be involved. To get us off the sidelines, He sends us adversities. It's a rude awakening sometimes.

You might be just bobbing along, floating down the river of your little life, when suddenly you hear a roaring noise. Around the bend, there it is. A waterfall!

You weren't really praying before, but brother, you are now. You were half-asleep just a minute ago, but sister, you are now wide-awake. You are motivated, and you will stay motivated for a while because you are in the middle of a crisis.

Have you noticed the way Romans 10:17 reads? "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith comes by what you have heard (past tense). Faith comes by hearing and hearing and hearing.

Everybody needs repeated, frequent—even continual—prodding and urging to step out in faith. That is why it is so important to keep the Word of God in your heart and mind.

Listen to worship music; listen to the Word of God being preached by an anointed man or woman of God. If possible, listen on your stereo, in your car, in your office—anything to keep your faith built up—and “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Adversities keep us walking in faith.

In 1993, our ministry operated out of a one-room office in downtown Cleveland, Tennessee. We were paying \$75 a month for that place, and we had to believe God for even that small amount of rent money.

One weekend, we were hit with a heavy rainstorm, and we lost our computer because the ceiling leaked. We had only one computer, and we lost it.

After that, we had had enough of small-faith mentality. We became determined to pray for the best God had for us. Before long, God worked a series of miracles, and we found ourselves the owners of the beautiful ministry center on a hillside that we have today. I’m glad the roof leaked in that old office.

Sometimes you have to step out on nothing and watch God turn it into something. You have to trust Him to take what the devil meant for bad and turn it into good. You have to stop running from your giants, stand strong and watch God defeat them.

Judy Jacobs is a recording artist, ordained Pentecostal minister, teacher and sought-after conference speaker. She is also the founder of His Song Ministries and the International Institute of Mentoring and the host of the TV program Judy Jacobs Now! Her latest book, Stand Strong, is available through our Web site, .

