

Transforming Vicious Attacks Against You Into Prosperous Growth

“A certain amount of opposition is a great help to a man. Kites rise against, not with, the wind.” – Lewis Mumford

I was recently on the phone with a dear friend. I’ve always known her and her husband to be pure, humble and compassionate, yet they’ve been through a lot recently. They’ve been maligned, rejected and misjudged.

My friend explained, “They have slandered us to ...” at which point she shared the names of a few key players. I listened. I understood. Then I lost track of what she was saying, because I no longer saw where they’d been or even what they were presently going through. I saw where the future would take them. I blurted out, “Good! You need to thank God for them. Their harsh treatment has made you into who you are today.”

Understand, it was not their mistreatment that I was celebrating; it was this couple’s response to the mistreatment that made me know their future was bright.

I have learned to be so incredibly thankful for the opposition of rivals in my life. Rather than quit and wallow in the despair of discouragement, I have learned to look back and see the repeated faithfulness of God. He carried me each and every time when I didn’t think I could go on another day. I have learned more about the faithfulness of God from my enemies than from my friends.

Friends will offer you shelter, which is a good thing, but not necessarily a dynamic that fosters growth. Friends want to see you protected from the storms of life, while an enemy will do their best to lock you out in the pouring rain. But what if

you are in a season when God wants you to learn that He is your ultimate shelter? Who is a better instructor: a rival or a friend?

Rivals are a fact of life. I know. Sorry. I don't like it either, but it is true. And yet, rivals are not without purpose. Creating a life without rival is not about removing rivals from your life. Rather, it is about understanding that truly all things can work together for our good when we are called according to God's purpose. We can use the dynamics of rivalry to spur us on to greater growth and insight.

If viewed correctly, rivals can serve as a catalyst, exposing our weaknesses and challenging us to develop our strengths. They push us beyond our limits and cause us to look up when we feel alone.

You are a daughter without rival in the eyes of God. This is how you should see yourself relationally with your Creator, and it is your vantage for how you relate to others. But we would be more than naïve if we pretended that rivalries didn't exist and that the promises came to us without a battle. The proclamation "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14) does not negate the existence of darkness. Saying that you are a daughter without rival does not mean you will not encounter rivals any more than saying you are light means you will never face darkness.

You are filled with the same Spirit that raised Christ from the grave. Rivals want you to fight on their terms and in your own strength. You must be bigger than that. As children without rival, we do good when we are dealt evil. Ultimately this is not about our glory; it is all for His.

Rivals have the power to pull you out of obscurity or knock you out of your place of prominence. The good news is that you get to choose what they will produce in your life. Will your rival best you, or bring out the best in you?

We can argue our case, or we can lay it before God. We can whine, or we can thank God that He is using a rival to refine us and position us for our destiny. The choice is ours to make, and no rival can take that away from us.

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