

Why Faithful Christians Don't Always 'Prosper'

"If God exists, why are people battling cancer?"

"If God is real, why are homeless people sleeping on the street?"

"If God is who He says He is, why do we experience sadness, hardship and heartbreak?"

Those are commonly asked questions by countless unbelievers. In fact, believers have asked the same questions at some point in their lives, too, and I share that factoid with certainty because I was once on the speaking end of those questions. People often wonder why the faithful suffer and why believers do not always prosper despite their faith.

In 2015, when my mom fell ill with cancer, I remember crying out to God. "Why, God?" I screamed. "Why my mother? She loves you. She believes in you. Why is she so sick, God?"

My husband heard my cries as I was wailing from our bedroom upon hearing the news of my mom's stage 4 gastric cancer.

"Laci," he said as he gently put his hand on my shoulder. "Our reward is in heaven, and our faith doesn't mean we will live perfect lives or be exempt from pain while on earth."

His answer angered me because at that moment I couldn't seem to come to grips with my mom's illness. I just wanted to be angry and, admittedly, I decided to direct my anger toward God. I questioned Him, I refused to pray, and I turned my back on the one who never turned His back on me.

From that moment forward, my husband and loved ones prayed for my mom, and they prayed for me, too, because they knew I was having a difficult time processing this news. Their prayers

filled me with renewed strength and peace, thus leading me to dive back into my prayer life. The ironic part is that my mom's condition worsened, yet my faith strengthened. During that trying stage in my life, I fell in love, yet again, with a specific Scripture that has led me through troubled waters.

"When you pass through waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame kindle on you" (Isa. 43:2).

Even the most faithful, diligent Christians will suffer from sickness, failures, heartbreak and letdowns. You might pray for hours on end, regularly attend church, tithe, read the Word and treat others with love and respect, but that does not mean God will automatically grant you success. Faith is not a permanent hall pass for life's troubles, and choosing to believe in God does not mean you have a genie with unlimited wishes. However, faith does entitle you to something better than a life of perfection and success—eternal life. Fellow believers and those teetering on the fence, remember that the level of one's success or failures is not a measure of one's faith. Look toward heaven as the ultimate reward.

"I press on toward the goal to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

Steer clear of convincing yourself that Christianity paves a path of prosperity. A sanctimonious mode of thinking will deviate even the strongest believer and place them on the path of pride, bitterness, skepticism and emptiness. Instead, remind yourself that the enemy always aims high; he focuses his attention on those who are right with God. God makes no mistakes, and in everything He does, He prepares you to be the best version of yourself.

To grow in character is a priceless blessing more valuable than a life without difficulties. Strengthen His Kingdom by

glorifying His name, no matter the circumstances. {eoa}

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