

Flourishing in the Midst of Trials (Part 3)

by Bayless Conley

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Hello, friend. I am so glad that you have joined me. If you got a Bible, grab it, sit down, and open, if you would, 1 Corinthians 10. We're going to look at verse 13 in a minute. We're going to be talking about flourishing in the midst of trials. We all have trials, we all have troubles, and God has a way to victory for us through those trials, and through those troubles. We're going to look at some things that will be very, very important for you.

There's a verse in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that has meant a lot to me throughout the years, and I've shared it with a lot of people because there's a truth there that is absolutely liberating, and it also gives us direction. It says this,

¹³ No temptation. (Other translations say trouble or trial. The word can mean any of those things. Temptation, test, trouble, or trial.) No temptation, (no test, no trouble, no trial) has overtaken you except such as it's common to man;

That's good to know right there. That the stuff we go through, other people go through the same things. You are not alone in your suffering. He went on, and he said,

But God is faithful, (That is so good to know. In our test, in our troubles, God is faithful. Faithful to do what? Here you go.) But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted (tested or tried) beyond what you are able, but with the temptation (with the trouble) will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Now, that tells us some important things. We're going to have troubles. We're going to have trials. You may be in the midst of a fiery furnace of some financial disaster right now. Maybe your marriage seems to have burned down around you, and you're just looking at the ashes of what used to be. Maybe you're fighting a great physical battle over your health; it may have to do with your kids.

It may have to do with issues at work or just some internal things. Fearful thoughts, and doubts that you grapple with all the time. Whether it's an internal trial or an external trial, here's the truth. "God is faithful who always makes a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it. With the temptation, with the trial," the Scripture says, "That God makes a way of escape." I like The Passion Translation. It puts part of the verse this way. It says,

¹³ And each test is an opportunity to trust him more, for along with every trial God has provided for you a way of escape that will bring you out of it victoriously.

That is God's plan for us. There is this way of escape, and God does want to bring us out victoriously. The Bible says, "That He always causes us to triumph in Christ." The Scripture says, "That He will never leave us, He will never forsake us." Therefore, we can boldly say, "The Lord is my helper. I will not fear what man can do on to me." Now, in our troubles, in our trials,

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we need to look for that pathway that God has provided. We need to look for the provisions that He has laid out for us ahead of time that are present with us there in that trouble.

You may not be able to see it right now, you may not know which way to turn, but my friend, God does have provision for you, and He has a pathway for you to walk on. He has not forsaken you in the midst of that trouble.

You might think, "Listen, I brought this on myself. I don't know about that. I'm just eating the fruit of my own bad decisions." That may be true, and all of us have been there to one degree or another, but the scripture says, "God is faithful." His faithfulness is not based on our faithfulness. He is faithful all the time. He is gracious all of the time. The Lord is compassionate all the time. If the Lord marked iniquity, who would stand? The thing you need to do, if it's your fault, you need to repent. Turn around and go the other direction, and trust God for His mercy. Look to His word and to His spirit for guidance.

Now, what I'd like to do is we progress with this thought of "What do we do? How do we navigate this difficult terrain we find ourselves in?" Again, whether that is physical, financial, spiritual, emotional, whatever form the trouble's taking, how do we navigate it? What are some thoughts that can help us navigate the difficulties that we face?

Here's one for you. It's important to remember, when you're in the midst of a trial, that God is not your enemy. Now, we do have an adversary, but God is not the adversary. The Bible says, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, not God, your adversary, the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Meaning, he can't just devour anyone at will. He has to find someone that's got a chink in their armor. He has to find someone in disobedience. He's searching for someone to devour.

You may as well just say, "Look, devil, that's not me. You may as well just keep on going in your search." The devil is our adversary, not God. I want to say this as well, not people. Jesus said this, and to me, it's a great line of demarcation. John 10:10, Jesus said,

¹⁰ "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy."

By contrast, Jesus said,

"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

The Greek language says, "In superabundance." Jesus came to give us life, and that more abundantly. The devil only comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy. If it steals, if it kills, if it destroys, it's not from God. It's the enemy's work. If it brings life, my friend, that is the work of Jesus. So good to remember that. I remember, as a young believer, I hadn't been saved long, and there was a local grocery store. Then in the back part of it, they had a little coffee shop back there, and they had donuts, and you could get a coffee. I'm sitting back there, I'm reading my Bible.

And again, I'm just a fresh new convert in love with Jesus, so excited about the things of God. Now, I'm no longer a new convert, but I'm still excited. Now, I'm still in love with God, that has never gone away. Now, I'm sitting there reading my Bible. I've got my bear claw, or a croissant, or something. I'm eating, and I'm drinking my coffee. This couple, they walk in. I would've estimated that they were in their 40s, maybe. Maybe early 40s, maybe mid-40s. I don't know. They wouldn't have been older than that.

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This lady comes in, and her husband's trailing behind her. She's got his arm. The guy was emaciated, and he could barely walk. It looked like he was ready to keel over. They sat down, and they were actually like picnic benches they had back there. They sat down in the little picnic bench near me. I struck up a conversation with them, with a view to share the gospel with them. I just engaged them in conversation, thought, "I'm going to talk to them about Jesus." In fact, if you stood still long enough, I was going to talk to you about Jesus. I found out right away that they were both believers. Then she launched into this long story about how her husband has had seven heart attacks.

Now, he wasn't saying anything. He's just sitting there. He's literally hanging to life by a thread. That his entire quality of life has been diminished. Their quality of life has been diminished. This great struggle. This poor man, heart attack after heart attack after heart attack. Now, he literally looked like he was going to die sitting there on the bench. In my innocence, I said, "Would it be okay if we prayed for your husband?"

She didn't like that. She launched into this bit of an antagonistic language against me, saying "What do you mean pray for him? No, we're not going to pray for him. God is the one that's done this to him. Do you understand that? God gave him these seven heart attacks." She went on saying, it was all the hand of God that had done this to him. I was sitting there stunned, and then she grabs her husband's arm and did her best to hurry him out. It was a pretty slow gate that he had to get away from this crazy Christian that believed that God could possibly heal him or help him if we prayed. I was the crazy Christian.

They went out, took their coffee with them, and went out. I'm just sitting there absolutely dumbfounded. First, at their reaction, she literally had a violent reaction when I suggested that we pray for her husband, that when I suggested that God could help him through prayer, that God can make things better through prayer. She said, "No. No. No. No. No, this is what God has done." If we're blaming God for our troubles, there's no way we're going to look to Him for help. I just want to tell you something. God will never test us with anything that Jesus died to redeem us from. I want to read you something. This is from James 1:13. It says,

¹³ 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.

Other translations use the word "tested." Now, we do know from the Scripture that God does test His people. The Bible says, "The Lord tests the heart," and God will put us to the test sometimes by asking us to do something that is going to require sacrifice, perhaps even great sacrifice on our part; that's part of being a Christian. We take up our cross, and we follow Him in obedience.

He may direct you to move to a certain region of the world and give your life there as a missionary. That means you've got to leave family and friends and perhaps live on a level of life that is far below what you're used to living. But my friend, hallelujah for that. We're just here for a short time. Heaven's too real, hell's too hot, eternity's too long, time's too short for us to disobey. Yet God will test our heart. God has tested this heart of mine. I remember, and there's a lot of things I could refer to, but one in particular. I was a fairly young Christian, and God dealt with me about giving something away.

Now, the truth is, I had given everything away that I owned, virtually, even down to my clothes. I had given them away, everything of value to me; I'd given away. I tried to give away my old

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Volkswagen van, and I'm glad the guy declined because I was actually living in it at the time. There was just something in me that I wanted to be generous. The truth is, there were things that I gave that I perhaps shouldn't have given just in my zeal and lack of wisdom, but my heart was right.

There was one thing, I won't tell you what it was, it wasn't of great value except to me. It was something that my father had given me when I was a boy. I felt like one day, as I was praying, the Holy Spirit put His finger on that thing and said, "What about that? Will you give that away for Me?" Man, I had to wrestle with that. Really what that comes down to is wrestling with Him over the lordship of my life. Truth be told, it took me a couple of days, but I got to the place that I was willing, and I was happily willing, not grudgingly willing, but I was happily willing. I said, "Lord, I'll do it. Who do you want me to give it to?" As clearly as anything, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart, and He said, "No one, you can keep it. I just wanted you to be willing."

Now, that was a test that helped me mature in the Lord. The Lord will test our hearts, but He will not test us by putting something on us that Christ died to redeem us from. Here it says, "God won't tempt or test anyone with evil." He's not going to tempt you to sin. He's not going to tempt you to be drunk. He's not going to tempt you with a secretary at work. He's not going to tempt you to be unfaithful with your next-door neighbor. He's not going to tempt you to curse. He's not going to tempt you to lie or to steal.

No, God does not tempt anyone with evil. He can't be tempted or tested Himself. If it comes under the category of evil, God does not do it. In fact, we come down just a few verses, verse 17, in fact, verse 16, James 1:16–17 it says,

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 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.

If it's not good, and it's not perfect, it didn't come down from God. I'm glad the good and perfect things they do come down from above, from the Father of lights. When it comes to this, there's not the slightest degree; there's not the slightest bit of variation. God gives good and perfect gifts. He does not give things that the Scripture calls evil.

Do you know in the Old Testament, it refers to disease as being evil and speaks of evil diseases? God's not going to put a sickness on you when Jesus took the stripes on His back to redeem you from sickness. The Bible says, "By His stripes, we were healed. Surely He's born our sicknesses and carried our pains," Isaiah 53. He's not going to put depression on us.

My friend, His brow wore the crown of thorns. The Bible says, "That the chastisement needful to obtain peace for us was upon Him by punishment." Again, Isaiah 53, "He is the Prince of peace." He's not going to tempt us with sin. He's not going to put sickness on us. He's not going to put depression upon us. Those are things Christ died to redeem us from. God will never tempt us with anything that Jesus died to redeem us from. He just will not do it.

It is just important to remember that God's not our problem. God's our deliverer. He's not our destroyer. Listen to a couple of other verses if you would. I love these. This is from Colossians, and we're looking at Colossians 1:15, speaking about Jesus. It says,

¹⁵ [Now] He is the exact likeness of the unseen God [the visible representation of the invisible]; He is the Firstborn of all creation.

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That's from the Amplified Bible, Classic Edition. "Jesus is the exact lightness of the unseen God." In John's Gospel, Jesus said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." Jesus is the will of God in action. To look upon Jesus is to look upon the Father. In Hebrews 1:3, the Scripture says this about Jesus,

³ He is the sole expression of the glory of God [the Light-being, the out-raying or radiance of the divine], and He is the perfect imprint and very image of [God's] nature.

Again, this is from the Amplified Bible, Classic Edition, but Jesus is "the perfect imprint and very image of God's nature." You want to know what God's nature is like? Look at Jesus. Look at Jesus in His earthly ministry. Look at how Jesus dealt with people. I've got a question. Did Jesus ever make one person sick during His earthly ministry? No. Jesus never made a single person sick during His earthly ministry. He said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father."

He is the exact representation of the invisible God. To look at Jesus is to look at the very nature of God. Did Jesus ever put depression on anyone? No. Never. Did He ever hurt a child? No. He laid His hands on the children, and He blessed them. He healed the sick. He lifted people. He restored people. He didn't take away life; He brought life.

To see Jesus is to see the Father. He is the deliverer, not the destroyer. I don't know how, but people get that mixed up. Even Christians, I listen to them talking. It seems like they've got God and the devil mixed up. They're in this horrific problem, and they blame God. They're battling a disease, and they say that God's given it to them. All right, let's just say for a moment that He did.

If you say that God is the one that made you sick, then it would be utter rebellion for you to go to a doctor and try to get well. It would be utter rebellion for you to even take an aspirin to try and get out of the will of God. That just doesn't even make sense. No, God does not test us with things that Christ died to redeem us from. I want to add to it. It's important when you're in a trial not to just know that God is not your problem but to realize that people are not your problem either. The Bible says in Ephesians 6:12,

¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

"We don't wrestle against flesh and blood." Listen, your enemy is not your boss. Your enemy is not your wife. Your enemy is not your neighbor that hasn't brought back your lawnmower. Your enemy is not a person. Now, there may be an evil spirit that's influencing someone, and through that person, they're creating trouble in your life. We need to realize that behind the scenes, there are spiritual forces at work. As long as we blame God or we blame people, we're not going to find the help that we need.

I do a lot of fishing; I do a lot of different kinds of fishing. I've fly-fished since I've been a little boy, done a lot of fly fishing. I still do occasionally. I've done a lot of large mouth bass fishing, done a lot of fishing in the ocean. I was thinking, actually, this morning; I was enjoying a cup of tea sitting at my kitchen table. I was thinking about one of the areas that I would go bass fishing with a friend.

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We'd have a lure on these little bait casting rods. You'd throw that lure into this pocket where you knew there was some bass sitting there, and you would make that thing dance, and wham, the fish would hit it. We'd have fun, and we'd laugh. You maybe got a two, three, four-pound bass that you're bringing up into the boat. I wonder if those bass ever knew what was on the end of the line that was making that lure dance in front of them. Man, they would never strike that lure. Friend, you need to realize that your enemy is not God, and it's not people.

We have an adversary called the devil again, who walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He is the adversary. He is the deceiver. He is the enemy. You know, you look at a matador, he's in the ring with a bull, and that bull thinks that the red cape is his enemy. The bull charges the cape, and the matador sticks a sword in the bull's back. Then again, the bull charges at the cape. If the bull ever realized for a moment who the real enemy is, things would change drastically. The good news, Jesus said, "Listen, I give you power over all the power of the enemy. Nothing shall by any means, hurt you."

Jesus said, "In my name, go into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, lay hands on the sick, and they'll recover," and He said, "Cast out demons." The Book of James says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Hallelujah. First, it says, of course, "Submit yourself to God. Then resist the devil, and he will flee from you." We do have authority over the enemy. Listen, it's just so good to remember that in the middle of a trial, we can look to God. He is the faithful one. He is the one that makes a way of escape. He is the one that wants to help us, not hurt us.

Then it's important as well, second thing to remember that God always tells the truth, and the devil is a liar. God always tells the truth, and the devil is a liar. Let me read another verse to you if I might. This is from the Book of Numbers 23:19. It says,

¹⁹ "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

"God's not a man that He should lie." No. He will bring His Word to pass. Heaven and earth will pass away, but His Word will not pass away. Listen to these verses from Hebrews 6:16–18.

¹⁶ For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. ¹⁷ Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

His counsel is immutable. It's impossible for God to lie. God cannot lie. By contrast, this is what Jesus said, speaking to some religious leaders of His day, John 8:44, He said,

⁴⁴ "You're 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 it."

Satan's just not a liar; he's the father of lies. Now, here we have God, who cannot lie. It's impossible for Him to lie. His counsel is immutable. His promises will come to pass on the other side of the ledge. We got the devil. Everything he says is a lie. I remember I was talking to a man one time, he was absolutely distraught, and he said, "Bayless, the devil keeps telling me that I'm going to die. That I'm going to die early. I'm tormented over it."

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I keep thinking. What's my family going to do when I'm gone? What are my kids going to do without a father?" It's a single-income family, and I'm the one that provides for the family. What's my wife going to do? The devil just keeps telling me that I'm going to get sick, and I'm going to die, and I'm tormented." He was serious. I just said, "What of it?" He said, "What do you mean what of it? I'm tormented by this." I said, "Okay." I got the Bible. We looked at a number of scriptures where God says very clearly that He's our healer. That by Jesus' stripes were healed. That God forgives all our iniquities. He heals all of our diseases.

We looked at a number of verses. I said, "Now you see these promises?" I said, "You're familiar with those?" He said, "Yes, I know those scriptures." Then I took him to John 8:44, and I said, "Look, the devil is a liar. Everything he says is a lie." I said, "Now, you recognize that's the devil talking to you, right? Saying that you're going to die." He says, "Yes, I guess so." I said, "Not you guess so. Absolutely. It's contrary to what God says about you and what God promises for you." He says, "I guess you're right." I will tell you some good news. He actually got it. From that day forward, he refused those thoughts. He just resisted them because he knew where they came from. He's actually an old man today, still married. His kids are all grown up, but he just refused to believe the lie of the devil.

If you're tormented right now in your situation, listen; if the devil says you're going to sink, well, don't believe him. He's a liar. Believe Jesus, who said, "Let's cross to the other side. You're going to make it to the other side. You're not going to sink halfway, even if a great storm has arisen over your little sea." God is faithful, and He makes a way of escape. I wish we had more time to continue today, but we don't. My time's almost gone. We're going to continue next time. All I can say is you're not going to want to miss it.

You're going to miss half your life if you miss what I share next time. Oh man, I'm chomping at the bit to share some thoughts with you, but it's going to have to wait. For right now, listen, if you're watching me wherever you are, I just want to ask why? When you're listening to my voice, why? You could be doing anything else. You could be anywhere else right now. You could be listening to music. You could be taking a jog. You could be fast asleep. You could be with friends. You could be drunk in a pub. Why are you listening to me? It's because God has got your attention, my friend.

He loves you, and He wants you to know Him. Jesus Christ died on the cross to bring you into a relationship with the Father. Call on the name of Jesus today and be saved. We'll see you next time.

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