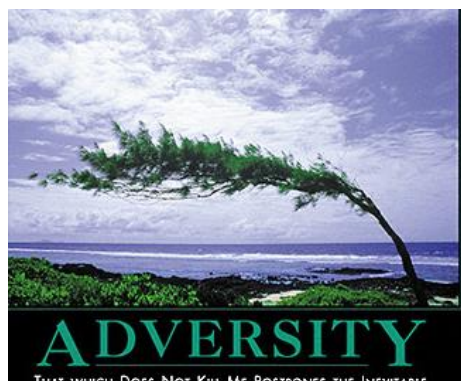




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Gentle Living in Hard Times: It is about God's Fellowship

I. Adversity and prosperity are both sides of God's coin.

- Christians learn and then demonstrate the art of facing affliction with comfort. II Cor. 1:3-11, esp. 1:3-7, 9; 4:7-12. Cf. Matt. 5:4/Is. 61:2, Jn. 16:33.
 - We are **afflicted** (Greek **θλεβω**, Strong #2346 = pressed like one would grapes, therefore to be pressed upon; therefore a “tight place” on a road; therefore a troubling problem, a tribulation or a distress), but **not crushed** (Greek **στενοχωρεω**, Strong #4729 = to be in a “tight place” so that one is crushed or cannot move; to be cramped so that one cannot do what is necessary). II Cor. 4:8a.
 - We are **perplexed** (Greek **απορεω**, Strong #639 = without a place to ford a river, without a path, without resources, to be lacking, embarrassed, doubting; not knowing which way to turn), but **not despairing** (Greek **εξαπορεω**, Strong #1820 = to be completely without resources, direction, or hope so that one is in complete despair). II Cor. 4:8b.
 - We are **persecuted** (Greek **διωκω**, Strong #1377 = to chase, to make someone run away from you, to make an army to retreat, to harass, trouble, afflict or oppress), but **not forsaken** (Greek **εγκαταλειπω**, Strong #1459 = to abandon, desert, to completely leave without any resources so that one is completely helpless). II Cor. 4:9a.
 - We are **struck down** (Greek **καταβαλλω**, Strong #2598 = to throw down, to be knocked down so that one is lying prostrate on the ground, to be demoted in rank or status), but **not destroyed** (Greek **απολυμμι**, Strong #622 = to completely abolish or ruin something, therefore to suffer the loss of true, eternal life). II Cor. 4:9b.

- We always carry about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be demonstrated in our body. II Cor. 4:10. Cf. Rom. 6:3-7, Col. 3:5, Gal. 2:20, 3:26-27, 5:24, 6:14.
- All of this strength is from God! II Cor. 1:9, 4:7, 5:18.
- God's work provides happiness in prosperity and "consideration" in adversity. Eccl. 7:13-14. Cf. Eccl. 11:9-12:8 & 12:13-14.
 - **"Prosperity"** (Hebrew *tobah*, Strong #2899b = fullness of life, wholeness and health, including moral goodness and kindness, physical health and wealth, and emotional gladness or cheerfulness) is part of life as God has designed it – especially for people who loyally obey God! Eccl. 7:14, Dt. 30:15-21. Cf. James 5:13b.
This included city and country blessings, reproduction of clan and of productivity, food, military security, leadership, and even holiness! Cf. Dt. 28:1-14.
 - **"Adversity"** (Hebrew *raah*, Strong #7463a, from *roa*, Strong #7455 = a bad, calamitous condition, including moral evil, physical deformity, or emotional sadness) is also a part of life in this broken world – sometimes due to our disloyal obedience, but sometimes due to the destructiveness of other people or of decaying creation. Eccl. 7:14, Dt. 30:15-21. Cf. James 5:13a, 14-18.
This included city and country setbacks, failure to reproduce the clan, failure to be productive or profitable, failure to enjoy food, military security, leadership, or holiness. Cf. Dt. 28:15-68.
 - To **"consider"** (Hebrew *raah*, Strong #7200) means to see something, and therefore to pay attention to something so that we experience and understand something. Eccl. 7:14.
 - **God has provided adversity** so that He can **stimulate our understanding** toward **humble focus on this moment in life** and **humble acceptance of the next moment's unpredictability**. Eccl. 7:13-14.
- In order to have comfort in adversity, we need to remember that our life is about God. How does this work?

II. Life is all about God's fellowship.

A. Christians live gently in adversity when our only real “pride and joy” is God’s approval of us.

1. God’s approval of us is our only real reason for “joyful pride,” but this is worthy of proud exultation (Greek verb to take pride in = **καυχασθαι**, Strong #2744, noun for the object of pride = **καυχημα**, Strong #2745, noun for the action of taking pride = **καυχησις**, Strong #2746). Jer. 9:23-24/I Cor 1:29, 31 & II Cor. 10:17-18, II Cor. 1:12-14, 24. Cf. Rom. 5:1-11, esp. 5:2-3, 11, 15:17, Gal. 6:14, James 1:9-11, II Tim. 2:19.
2. Loving God permits us to be known by Him as we keep His commandments by living in Jesus. I Cor. 8:3, Dt. 6:4-9/Mk. 12:29-30/Mt. 22:37-38 & Lk. 10:27, I Jn. 4:7-21, esp. 4:7-8, Jn. 14-17, esp. 14:15, 21, 23-24, 15:10, I Jn. 5:3, II Jn. 6, Gal. 4:8-9. Cf. Rom. 8:29, 11:2.
3. Desiring the approval of people for our sense of self-esteem – our “pride and joy” – fails us as does all other pride in “what is seen.” II Cor. 5:6-15, esp. 5:10-12, Acts 4:19-20 & 5:29, I Thess. 2:4, Gal. 1:10. Cf. II Cor. 10:7-8, 12-18, 11:30, 12:5-6, 9, I Jn. 2:15-17, Phil. 3:2-11, esp. 3:3b, 9-11, 17-21, esp. 3:18-19.
4. Adversity destroys us unless our “pride and joy” is our relationship with God.

B. Christians live gently in adversity when we take joyful pride in being God’s people doing His will.

1. God’s gospel was designed to help us have an association with God as our Father so that we grow to be like Him and see others who are doing so as our brothers and sisters. I Jn. 1:5-6, 2:1-2, 3-4, 10-11.
Cf. I Jn. 2:29, 3:1-10, etc. on being righteous rather than sinning and I Jn. 3:11-24, etc. on loving rather than hating as part of this righteousness.
Cf. I Pet. 1:14-16, 2:4-12, I Cor. 3:16-17 & 6:18-20, Eph. 2:19-20 on being holy as God is holy so we can be His temple together.

2. Walking in God's light permits Jesus' blood to wash away all sin so we are in "fellowship" – joint participation or partnership (Greek noun for a partnership = **κοινωνία**, Strong #2842, verb to become a partner = **κοινωνεω**, Strong #2841, adjective used as a noun for a partner in such an association = **κοινωνος**, Strong #2844) – with deity and with God's people – those others who are walking in God's light.

I Jn. 1:3-2:2, esp. 1:3, 1:5, 6, 7, 2:1-2.

Cf. Acts 2:42, II Cor. 13:14, Gal. 2:9, Phil. 1:3, 2:1, 3:10, Philemon 1:6 & 17, I Cor. 1:9, 10:16, 18-20, II Cor. 1:7, 8:23, 6:14, Heb. 10:33, I Pet. 5:1 & II Pet. 1:4.

3. Adversity destroys us unless our "pride and joy" is doing God's will.

C. Christians live gently in adversity when take joyful pride in other people who are being God's people doing God's will.

1. God's association with us leads us to take joyful pride in our work together and in one another. Phil. 2:14-18, esp. 2:16, 4:1, 3, 21-22. Cf. Phil. 1:3-11, esp. 1:4-6.
2. God's Fatherhood leads us to take joyful pride in fellow Christians doing God's work. II Cor. 1:14 & 24, 7:4, 7:14, 8:23-24, 9:2-4.
3. Adversity destroys us unless our "pride and joy" is our work together doing God's will.

III. God wants you!

- God wants everyone to repent rather than perish. II Pet. 3:9-14, esp. 3:9.
- Consider: Mk. 16:16, Acts 2:38 & 17:30-31, Matt. 10:32-33, Gal. 3:26-27 & Rom. 6:3-7, I Pet. 3:21-22, I Jn. 1:5-2:2.

Let God use hard times to gentle you!