

Attention:

There is a kind of pain that makes you cry, and then there is a kind of pain that makes you stop crying altogether. There is a season when you hurt so badly that you cannot sleep. You pray through the night. You cry in the shower. You drive down the road talking to God because you do not know what else to do. You walk into church hoping that one song, one Scripture, one prayer, or one touch from God will finally break what has been sitting on your chest.

But then something changes. You stop crying. You stop expecting. You stop feeling. You stop getting excited about things that used to set your soul on fire. You still come to church, but the worship does not move you like it used to. You still open your Bible, but the words seem to fall flat. You still pray, but your prayers feel like they are hitting the ceiling. You still believe God is real, but somewhere along the way, you have stopped anticipating that He is going to do something in your life.

Need:

It is very typical for a Christian to feel numb at times. This happens when a believer is going through hard times or spiritual trauma reaching no advantage. They have prayed but haven't seen the hand of God move on their behalf quick enough. It appears the Lord has become silent and your prayers have fainted. At times, the Christian will forsake assembling with fellow believers, and you may relapse in your faith if you do not see a positive change for an extended period of time.

Background:

Paul wrote this letter from Macedonia (a region of Greece) a year after writing 1 Corinthians, about A.D. 56. This letter is a picture of a shepherd's heart to a wayward people that taught the Corinthians that a true heart can only come from God's love. Corinth was a tempestuous city that no longer introduced philosophers and playwrights but was dominated by debauchery, sex, and human wisdom. It was filled with harlots, adulterers, fornicators, homosexuality, and lechers. Sex and idolatry were a business. The city was in moral decay and Rome did little to improve virtues. The Corinthians were so easily impressed by external factors and outward appearance. They walked by sight, not by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). Paul was not moved by credentials and letters of recommendation, as some of the Corinthians were (2 Cor. 3:1-3). Rather, Paul was led by the Spirit and functioned from the heart of God.

This chapter that the apostle Paul writes is about believers who endure human weakness while maintaining their integrity to Christ Jesus. The apostle's purpose for writing this letter was to rebuke the false teachers that had infiltrated the church, claiming to be apostles of Jesus Christ. "Fragile clay jars," speaks to our weakness and the surpassing power belongs

to God, not of human strength. Even when afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, or struck down, we are preserved by God's power. If truth be told, the average person would have every reason to give up and give in. However, because of the enriching power of God that is experienced in tough times, the Word of God urges us to stand fast and dig into the power which resides within us. Paul gives the believer a reminder of the crucifixion of Christ when we feel numb. His death is a reminder of our strength to be triumphant.

1. Numb—But Never Giving Up (v. 7-9).

- a. Don't confuse faith for your feelings.
 - i. *"For we walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5:7, NKJV).*
- b. Moses came to a place in his life where his praise seemed numb (*Exodus 17:11*).
 - i. When he dropped his hands, they began losing the battle.
 - ii. When he lifted his hands, they were winning the battle.
- c. Stop waiting until you feel strong enough, confident enough, for God to use you.
 - i. *"And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor. 12:9).*
 - ii. Numbness happens when you stop communicating with God.
 - iii. When you become numb, you can't hear the Holy Spirit speak.
- d. Victory is not given to those who are giving up—stop looking back.

2. Damaged—But Delivered (v. 10-12).

- a. Somebody was hurt, so you settled for a loss.
 - i. You stopped letting people get close, becoming a lone ranger.
 - ii. You stopped talking about what Jesus was doing.
 - iii. You stopped telling people what you were believing God for.
- b. David faced severe threats and accusations—he was at the point of fainting.
 - i. *"I would have fainted, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm 27:13).*
 - ii. Your feelings may be damaged, but God's faithfulness has not changed.
 1. *"... and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen." (Matthew 28:20, NKJV).*
 2. God told Moses, *"I will be with you!" (Exodus 3:12).*
 3. God told Joshua, *"The Lord your God is with you!" (Joshua 1:9).*
 4. God told Jacob, *"I am with you wherever you go!" (Genesis 28:15).*
- c. When you shut down your ability to feel pain, you may also shut down your ability to experience joy, intimacy, compassion, and spiritual direction.
 - i. You no longer feel guidance from the Spirit of God.
 - ii. *"The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me To eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell. Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war may rise against me, In this I will be confident. One thing I have desired*

of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple.” (Psalm 27:1–4, NKJV).

d. Now is not the time to fell God but to seek Him and fill His temple.

3. Resilient—Ability to Bounce Back (v. 13-15).

a. An upset condition that brought no relief caused you to drift.

i. To drift means to be carried or driven by currents.

ii. *“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38–39).*

b. When you are determined, God’s favor will go with you.

i. *“When you pass through the 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 scorch you.” (Isaiah 43:2, NKJV).*

c. You can come back from anything that has knocked you down or set you back.

i. *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13).*

d. Speak life to your situation.