

# HELP ME HANDLE HELL, ON MY WAY TO HEAVEN!

Weekly Bible Study | Mini Series Week 2

## Scripture Lesson

***But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. <sup>8</sup> We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup> Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup> Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. (2 Corinthians 4:7–10, KJV 1900)***

- I. Introduction - God, in His infinite wisdom, never promised His children a journey without storms.....
  - A. Here's the truth....
    1. He promised us something better: His presence in the storm. There are seasons in which God permits His children to encounter pressure, pain, perplexity, opposition, disappointment, loss, and spiritual warfare.
    2. These seasons do not mean that God has abandoned us. Often, they become classrooms in which faith learns endurance, weakness discovers grace, and believers find out that the power keeping them is greater than the attack coming against them.
    3. God does not waste our storms. He uses what we would have avoided to develop what we could not have gained any other way.
  - B. Hell Defined
    1. For the purpose of this lesson, hell can be described as any place, space, season, or situation in which the forces of darkness and the spirits of evil are permitted to wreak havoc through confusion, chaos, division, destruction, and death.
    2. We see hell break loose in homes when love turns into hostility; in marriages when communication becomes conflict; in communities when violence steals peace; in workplaces when envy and division poison relationships; in schools when fear and pressure overwhelm students; in churches when gossip and pride attack unity; and in

the private places of the human heart when grief, temptation,

disappointment, and despair try to convince us that God has forgotten us.

C. Narrative:

1. That brings me to a saint whose testimony still preaches: Sister Katie Mae Tims, the matriarch of the Tims family of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church. Whenever someone would ask Mother Tims how she was doing, she would say, "I'm learning to handle hell on my way to heaven."
2. She did not say hell was heaven. She did not call evil good. She did not pretend that pain did not hurt. She understood that what she was going through was not where she was going to. Her trouble had a location, but it did not have her destination. Her storm was real, but so was her Savior. Her struggle was present, but heaven was still ahead.

D. Inclusion

1. Sometimes you have to handle hell in your house while still believing God for peace in your home.
2. Sometimes you have to handle hell in your body while still believing God is the keeper of your life.
3. Sometimes you have to handle hell in your finances while still trusting that God is your provider.
4. Sometimes you have to handle hell in your family while refusing to let bitterness become your identity.
5. Sometimes you have to handle hell on your job while remembering that your employment is not your ultimate source.
6. Sometimes you have to handle hell in your mind while bringing every thought back under the authority of Christ.
7. Sometimes you have to handle hell in your friendships when people you trusted disappoint you.
8. Sometimes you have to handle hell in ministry while continuing to serve people who may never understand your sacrifice.
9. Sometimes you have to handle hell while grieving somebody you loved and learning how to live with an empty chair.
10. And sometimes you have to handle hell with tears in your eyes and praise in your mouth because you know that where you are is not where you are going.

#### E. Analysis of the Text

1. The setting of 2 Corinthians 4 is crucial. Paul is defending the authenticity of his apostolic ministry in the face of criticism, suffering, and opposition. Some could look at his hardships and conclude that a real servant of God should not suffer that much. Paul turns that reasoning upside down. His suffering does not disprove the Gospel; it displays the sustaining power of God. The weakness of the messenger becomes the stage upon which the strength of God is seen.
2. Verse 7 declares, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." The "treasure" is the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ and the knowledge of God revealed in Christ. Yet God places that priceless treasure in "earthen vessels", fragile, ordinary, breakable human beings. Clay jars were common household containers. They were useful but inexpensive and easily broken. God puts extraordinary treasure inside ordinary containers so that nobody confuses the container with the treasure. When fragile people survive crushing circumstances, God gets the glory.
3. Verse 8 says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair." "Troubled" carries the idea of being pressed or squeezed, but "not distressed" means not completely hemmed in or crushed beyond movement. "Perplexed" describes being at a loss or unable to see the way forward, but "not in despair" means not utterly without a way. Faith is not pretending to have every answer. Faith is trusting God when the answer has not yet appeared.
4. Verse 9 continues, "Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." "Persecuted" pictures being pursued, but Paul says we are "not forsaken" or better said, we are never abandoned or deserted by God. "Cast down" pictures being struck down or knocked to the ground, but "not destroyed" means the blow does not finish us. The text never denies the hit. It denies the hit the right to have the last word.
5. This text gives us a theology of resilient grace. Trouble can surround us without suffocating us. Confusion can confront us without conquering us. Enemies can pursue us without God abandoning us. Life can knock us down without taking us out. Troubled, BUT. Perplexed, BUT. Persecuted, BUT. Cast down, BUT.

What happened before the “but” describes the attack; what comes after the “but” describes the activity of God.

F. Parallel-HELL HAPPENS ON THE WAY TO HEAVEN, BUT GOD IS WITH US!

1. Believers are not exempt from hard places simply because we are headed toward heaven.
2. God shows us that He is with us by sustaining strength we did not know we possessed
3. By giving peace that does not match the circumstances
4. By sending people at the right moment
5. By opening doors we could not open
4. By bringing Scripture back to our remembrance
5. By answering prayer
6. By giving wisdom in confusion
7. By providing resources at the point of need
8. And sometimes simply by giving us enough grace to get up one more morning.
9. The evidence of God’s presence is not always that the fire goes out. Sometimes the evidence is that we are still standing in the fire and have not been consumed!
10. Here’s the shout: the pressure has limits. The confusion has limits. The persecution has limits. The fall has limits. The enemy has limits. But the power of God has no limits! The same God who saved you is able to sustain you.

G. Proposition: So then, what does the text teach us that should empower us as believers to handle hell on our way to heaven?

II. REMEMBER THAT WHEN THINGS WERE TIGHT, SOMEHOW YOU MADE IT

A. Practical Idea: Think about it for a moment. Pressure may squeeze you, but it cannot empty you of what God has placed inside you. You have already survived days you once thought would break you. Yet here you are. Your presence is evidence that pressure is not more powerful than providence! After all of the hell you have been through, you are still here and you are still standing!

B. Principle:

1. Paul says, ***“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed.”*** Pressure comes from multiple directions, but it does not completely close him in. God leaves room in the squeeze. The enemy can tighten the circumstances, but he cannot cancel the purpose of

God. The clay vessel may feel the pressure, but the treasure within it belongs to God.

2. In other words,
  - You've been cramped, but not crushed!
  - Broken, but not shattered!
  - Pressed and stressed but not separated from the Lord!
  - Wounded, but not wasted!
  - Bent, but not broken beyond repair!
  - Knocked down, but not knocked out!
  - Attacked, but not abandoned!
  - Stretched, but not snapped!
  - Bruised, but not buried!
  - Hit, but not hopeless!
  - Tested, but not terminated!
  - Surrounded, but not surrendered!
  - Disappointed, but not defeated!
  - Weary, but not worthless!
  - In the fire, but not finished!

Walking through the valley, but I'm not staying there!

- C. Practical Application: Hear this child of God, when things get tight, remember how many tight places God has already brought you through. Keep a record of answered prayers.

Remember the unexpected provision, the friend who called, the strength that came after you thought you were finished, the door that opened, and the peace that arrived before the problem changed.

Memory can become medicine. Yesterday's deliverance can give today's faith something to stand on.

- D. Philosophy: W. A. Droomgole said, "You do not know how strong God's keeping power is until life puts weight on it."
  1. A bridge proves its strength when weight crosses it.
  2. Faith proves its substance when pressure leans on it.
  3. The testimony of the believer is not, "I never felt pressure." It is, "The pressure never became greater than the God who held me."
- E. Biblical Illustration: Israel at the Red Sea is a picture of life getting tight. Pharaoh's army was behind them and the sea was in front of them. But Moses said, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD" (Exodus 14:13). God created a road where no road existed. The sea that looked like their dead end became their doorway! It's because the God we

serve is a God of deliverance!

- F. Practical Illustration: I had an argument with my only sister Nell when I was about 12 years old. I told her that she was so dumb she didn't know how to squeeze the toothpaste from the bottom to get the paste out of tube. She put her hand on her hip and said, "Yeah, but I'm smart enough to know that objective is to put enough pressure on the tube to get the good stuff out of it!"

Sometimes God allows life to put the squeeze on us! But, it is only to get the good stuff out!

You see, pressure shows us what the tube is carrying. Life can squeeze a believer until tears come out, prayers come out, groans come out, and praise comes out. But when life squeezes you, what God deposited in you can come out too! The pressure does not create the treasure that's inside! It reveals it!

- G. Moment of Meditation: In what ways has life put the squeeze on you? Here's an even better question: what came out?

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### III. REMEMBER THAT WHEN YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, GOD GOT YOU THROUGH

- A. Practical Idea: Not knowing what to do does not mean God does not know what He is doing! Your omniscience has never been a requirement for God's providence. You do not have to know everything when you belong to the One who does. I do not know who this is for, but please hear these two words and let them resonate in your soul for the rest of your life.....TRUST GOD!
- B. Principle:
1. Paul says, ***"We are perplexed, but not in despair."***
  2. Perplexity is the experience of not seeing the answer.
  3. Despair is the conclusion that there is no answer.
  4. Now here's the shout, we can say, "I don't know," without saying,

“There is no way.” Faith does not always know the route; faith holds the hand of the God who is our Guide! Are you shouting yet? You should be!

- C. Practical Application: When you do not know what to do, do what you know until God shows you what you do not know.
  - 1. Pray.
  - 2. Stay in the Word.
  - 3. Refuse impulsive decisions born out of panic.
  - 4. Seek godly counsel.
  - 5. Keep your integrity.
  - 6. Do not leave what God has already made clear because something else remains unclear.
  - 7. In other words, not knowing is not a sin!
- D. Philosophy:
  - 1. Clarity often comes while we are walking, not while we are worrying.
  - 2. Headlights on a dark highway do not show the entire journey; they illuminate enough road to keep moving.
  - 3. God often gives guidance the same way!
- E. Biblical Illustration: Jehoshaphat prayed in 2 Chronicles 20:12, ***“Neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.”*** He admitted his limitation while declaring his direction. He did not know what to do, but he knew where to look. God turned their confusion into the setting for divine victory.
- F. Practical Illustration: The other night I was driving home and hit a patch of dense South East Texas fog. It was a hot mess! I could not see anything. I could see the road. I could not see the ditch to the right or cars coming ahead. I could not see anything! I started to pull over. But fog is not like rain. It is not going to slack up! So I had to keep going. And I discovered something that I did not know that blessed me like crazy. My truck has fog lights! Yeah, the manufacturer put them in without consulting me. But, they only activate when fog is dense enough to require them. If I hadn’t continued onward I would have never known that they were included in my equipment!

Saints you’ve got some internal equipment!

- 1. Prayer will help you get through it!
- 2. Praise will help you get through it!
- 3. Perseverance will help you get through it!

4. Patience will help you get through it!
5. God's promises will help you get through it!
6. God's presence will help you get through it!
7. God's power will help you get through it!
8. God's peace will help you get through it!
9. Faith will help you get through it!
10. The Word will help you get through it!
11. Worship will help you get through it!
12. Remembering what God did before will help you get through it!
13. Knowing that trouble won't last always will help you get through it!
14. Knowing that God is still in control will help you get through it!
15. Keeping your eyes on heaven will help you get through it!

G. Moment of Meditation: In what ways has the Lord ever helped you get through it?

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#### IV. REMEMBER THAT JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE DOWN DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU'RE OUT

- A. Practical Idea: Being knocked down is an occurrence; it does not have to become your identity. The enemy wants you to interpret a fall as a finish and a setback as a sentence. But God specializes in resurrections! If He can raise Jesus from a grave, He can raise hope from disappointment, courage from defeat, purpose from pain, and a believer from the floor!
- B. Principle:
  1. Paul says we are ***"cast down, but not destroyed."***
  2. The Gospel is not a promise of an untouched life. Something hit Paul hard enough to put him on the ground, yet it did not finish him.
  3. The enemy may affect your position without possessing your destiny.
- C. Practical Application: When life knocks you down, do not make permanent conclusions from temporary positions. Rest if you need to rest. Cry if you need to cry. Ask for help. Let people pray for you. Take the next manageable step. Refuse to rename yourself according to what happened to you. In Christ, the ground can become the place where you rediscover

the hand that lifts you!

D. Philosophy:

1. The believer's resilience is not the claim that nothing can knock us down. It is the confidence that nothing can keep God from reaching us when we are in the lowest of places.
2. Sometimes the lowest place in your story becomes the place where you learn that God's hand reaches all the way to the floor.

E. Biblical Illustration: Peter denied Jesus three times and wept bitterly, but his failure was not his funeral. In John 21, the risen Christ restored and recommissioned him. The man who went down denying Jesus stood up on Pentecost declaring Jesus. A fall may become part of your testimony, but it does not have to become the conclusion of your story.

F. Practical Illustration: Somebody needs to hear this: The hardest thing you've been hit with does not get to decide how your story ends!

1. Holmes got hit, but he got up!
  2. He got dropped, but he got up!
  3. He got shaken, but he got up!
  4. He got stunned, but he got up!
  5. He got hurt, but he got up!
  6. And sometimes life will hit you with something you never saw coming.
  1. A betrayal can hit you!
  2. A disappointment can hit you!
  3. A financial crisis can hit you!
  4. Trouble in your family can hit you!
  5. The loss of somebody you love can hit you!
  6. An unexpected phone call can hit you!
  7. And sometimes the hit is so hard that it puts you on the canvas!
- But here's the good news:

## THE HIT WAS HARD, BUT IT WASN'T FINAL!

1. Because you can hit me and I can still get up!
2. You can hurt me and I can still get up!
3. You can knock me down and I can still get up!
4. You can make me cry and I can still get up!
5. You can leave me wondering what happened and I can still get up!
6. Because being knocked down doesn't mean I've been knocked out!
7. And here's what makes the story preach:
8. Holmes got knocked down by Shavers, but eventually Shavers was the one who couldn't continue!
9. The thing that knocked you down **doesn't necessarily have enough power to keep you down!**  
  
**"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."**  
  
**(2 Corinthians 4:9 KJV)**
10. Here's the shout: I WAS CAST DOWN, **BUT I WASN'T DESTROYED!**
11. A boxer can be knocked to the canvas and still win the fight. The match is not decided just because he hit the floor. Life has landed some blows on you so hard that people assumed you were finished. But grace interrupted the count. Mercy told you to get up. The Holy Ghost put strength back in your legs. You were down, but God would not let you be out!

G. Moment of Meditation: In what ways has life dropped you to your lowest point? Be specific.

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## V. CONCLUSION: PRACTICING FOR HEAVEN

### A. Mother Katie Mae Tims shouted every Sunday

1. As her health began to fail, her worship did not fail with it.
2. She would still dance.
3. She would still praise.
4. She would still celebrate the Lord. Mother Tims would say, "The more I shout, the better I feel!" Think about that. Her body could be weakening while her worship was strengthening. Pain could attack her body without taking possession of her praise. When people asked what she was doing, she would say she was "practicing for her time in heaven."
5. Mother Tims understood something every believer needs to remember: praise is rehearsal for eternity. One day the last storm will pass. One day the last tear will fall. One day the last doctor's appointment will be over. One day the last funeral procession will make its journey. One day the last heartbreak will hurt. One day the last battle will be fought. One day the last temptation will be resisted. One day the last devil will have done all he can do. And when the saints arrive in the presence of God, hell will never follow us home.

### B. That is the bounty of heaven.....

1. Everything God has promised His children will finally be ours without interruption. That is the bliss of heaven: joy without sorrow, peace without pain, worship without weariness, fellowship without farewell, life without death. That is the beauty of heaven: Revelation 21:4 declares, ***"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."*** Hell may happen here, but it will be no more over there!

2. So when hell breaks loose in your life, remember: this is not home. When trouble presses you, remember: this is not home. When you are perplexed, remember: this is not home. When people pursue you, remember: this is not home. When life knocks you down, remember: this is not home. You are handling hell on your way to heaven!
3. And if you belong to Jesus Christ, there is coming a day when faith will become sight. The hands that held you when you were troubled will welcome you home. The Savior who kept you when you were perplexed will stand before you. The Christ who refused to forsake you when you were persecuted will receive you into His presence. The Lord who lifted you every time you were cast down will bring you into a Kingdom where you will never be down again.
4. So shout while you are hurting. Praise while you are pressing. Worship while you are waiting. Dance while you are dealing with it. Mother Tims had it right: practice now for where you are going! Because one day there will be no more hell to handle—only heaven to enjoy. No more night. No more pain. No more crying. No more dying. No more separation. No more sorrow. No more Satan. No more sin. No more suffering. We will see Jesus!
5. And to the person who does not yet know Christ: heaven is not reached by endurance, morality, church attendance, or good intentions. Jesus Christ is the way. He died for our sins, was buried, rose again, and offers eternal life to everyone who believes. Give Him your life. Trust Him as Savior. Follow Him as Lord. Then you can face every hellish season on earth with this assurance: trouble may be where I am, but heaven is where I am going. I may be troubled, but I am not distressed. I may be perplexed, but I am not in despair. I may be persecuted, but I am not forsaken. I may be cast down, but I am not destroyed. By the grace of Almighty God, I am learning to handle hell on my way to heaven!

