

Encouragement

by Manley Beasley

We are not responsible for what happens to us, but we are responsible for how we respond to what happens to us, and in the midst of hard times, we can discover God's faithfulness and love.

Duration: 1:19:58

Scripture: Job 3:1-7, James 1:2

Topics: "Encouragement"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Job and how he faced hard times. Job's friends initially provided comfort by simply being present, but they made things worse when they started blaming Job for his troubles. Despite the inexplicable and unexplainable circumstances, Job turned his focus to God and realized that his troubles were invaluable for his spiritual growth. The preacher encourages the audience to see their own hard times as opportunities for spiritual enlargement and to turn back to God.

Transcript

It's always a joy and a privilege to come to you by means of tape. It thrills me every time I get to thinking about many, many, many, many dear friends out there that listen to me each month, and I praise God for the opportunity of sharing with you. This particular tape is a very different tape.

It's not me preaching, by the way, it's a friend preaching. The friend's name is Carlos McLeod. Some weeks ago, Carlos McLeod came to our church and preached this particular message.

And it was so encouraging to me at that time that I just felt that my friends really needed to hear this message. As you know, I'm not much of an encouraging preacher. I'm more of a prophet and always dealing with issues, and so it's a different story.

So I just don't encourage people a lot. I love to. I need it myself a lot.

But I know there's a lot of hurting people out there, and many of you still get my tapes, and I just want you to hear this tape, and I trust that it will circulate around to other people that are hurting, because I know that you folk are, you know, in such shape that this word will be a very, very special word for you. And I want you to know people are hurting all over the country, and especially in Texas and Louisiana and Oklahoma, those areas. It seems that the oil industry has just gone to nothing, and those people related to that industry.

And there, of course, is many, many aspects of the industry out there just going down the drain, and it is really hard to understand. In fact, I just recently had a talk with a man. He just didn't understand.

He said folk that have given are having to go under because they just can't make it, and they've given like they should. And there are a lot of questions that need answering at this point, and I trust that next month's tape I will deal somewhat with this situation and talk to you about that, as to why some Christians just literally go under. I've never seen the like of it, but many, many, many Christians that I know are really having a tough time.

So this tape will be very encouraging to you, I'm sure. Since I last talked to you, and by the time you get this tape things will be leveled out somewhat, but I still feel that I need to mention it to you. My last test proved that there was some kidney deterioration, and of course I'm not sure that you're aware of the fact that back in 1970 I had a problem physically, and the problem ended up attacking my kidneys where I have scar tissue on my kidneys, and the ability of those kidneys to function 100% has been impaired.

So through medication they have done real well for a number of years. The devil tells me almost daily that I'm going to have to have a kidney transplant or get on dialysis, but nevertheless these kidneys have done real well, but recently they have shown a little problem. And right now at the time of the making of this tape, the introduction of this tape that is, I am going to the doctor tomorrow to get my final test report.

I've already had the test, but the report will come in tomorrow, and we'll know which direction I'm supposed to go from the physical standpoint. Now this is quite a unique situation. I'm extremely satisfied with the doctor, and I just trust that you continue to pray.

Now when you get this, the answer will be settled as to which route we'll have to go about things. And I'm not saying, by the way, as I think back over what I've said, you might get the idea that I'll have to have a kidney transplant or a dialysis machine, and as far as we can tell, we're not that far along yet in deterioration. But anyway, I want to keep you up on that because I know you pray, I know you care, and I know you're a great part of this ministry, and I certainly want you to have a part in it by praying and seeing God work in my life as I need Him to work at this point.

Now let me just share this particular need with you also. Martha and I have been invited to Russia along with several other friends this December. And of course the physical condition has a lot to do with that, and the financial condition, and the spiritual condition, and my responsibility to churches and so on.

So I'm asking you to really pray as you receive this tape and get this understanding about where I am. Pray about this matter because it is quite a unique opportunity. It has been in the making a long time.

We have been sending people to Russia for three years, and this will be the fourth year, and all of them feel that I really need to go. So I am looking with anticipation of going at this point, but the test and so on and so forth, it just may get impossible. I'm not real sure, and so I really want you to pray about this matter.

Now I have been wanting to do this, the next thing I'm going to do for a long time, but I just have not worked it out. But today I happened to think of it, and so I thought I would share with you my schedule for the month of October. For the month of October I'm going to be at Calvary Baptist Church in Brunswick, Georgia.

And the pastor's name is Ronald Haslett, I believe. And Martha, by the way, she's going to be in Nacogdoches, Texas, I believe the 15th and the 16th, and so you need to pray for her. And then October

19-23, I'm going to be at Hillcrest Baptist Church in Dallas, Dixon Ryle, pastor.

And then October 26-31, Bannock Byrne Baptist Church, Jim Aberdeen, pastor, and Ron Dunn and I will be there in a Bible conference. So we really need your prayers for this particular month. It's full, and we're looking forward to a great time together.

Now continue to pray for us, and I believe this tape will be a real, genuine blessing to you. The tape next month will be back on the line concerning the faith workbook number two, and I think it will be the third message in relationship to that book. May God bless you.

Certainly a joy to talk to you. May the Lord keep you in His wonderful blessings during these days. God bless you.

Irma Bombeck wrote a book. She called the book, *If Life is a Bowl of Cherries, Why Am I Always in the Pits?* There is a playwright by the name of Bristow, Gwen Bristow. In his play, *Tomorrow is Forever*, he has a character named Eric Kessler.

Eric is writing his farewell letter to the love of his life. He is a veteran of World War I. His body has been shot up, and he is so physically gone that he'll not live much longer, and he cannot have this girl that he has so wanted to be his companion for life, but now it's impossible. And he writes the letter to her.

One little line in that letter says, I am not responsible for what happens to me, but I am responsible for how I respond to what happens to me. That's what I want to talk about. Hard times.

How do we handle hard times? If you are not depressed, leave this church today and go read the business section of the Dallas paper. That'll depress you. If you have a little problem being down, listen to the economic reports about the circumstances that we're in.

One thousand times a day in America, some judge's gavel falls, and with two words, somebody's love story comes to an end. Divorce granted. Hard times.

That's the thing we want to know. How do we handle hard times? Job is reminding us, through 42 chapters in the Bible, that these kind of experiences that we're going to have never leave us the same. We'll either be better or we'll be bitter.

They never leave us the same. Job polarizes his life through the book. First you see Job losing everything.

There's nothing left. Job is without. He's lost his finances.

He's lost his real estate. He's lost his cattle. He's lost his family.

He's lost his health. And Job says in verse 22 of chapter 1, I'm not going to blame God for this. But later on you see him in the 7th chapter of Job, he's calling God names.

He calls him a jailer. And now in the 42nd chapter, he comes to the point of saying, I have been trying to understand things that are beyond me and now I see God in all that God is. And that's the way to handle hard times.

Not in chapter 7 but in chapter 42. That's the way to handle hard times. We're not responsible for what happens to us but we are responsible for how we handle what happens to us.

You see, hard times, according to Peter's book, the little book in the New Testament, we're going to have them. We need to take them for granted and certainly we need to understand that when they come they will pass and that we ought not to waste them. So I felt in my heart today, God would have us spend the minutes of this service investigating for ourselves three things, three vital lessons about hard times as they relate to Job's life.

The first thing is hard times are inescapable. If anybody was going to get by without them, it ought to have been Job. Here is a man that is rich, a hard worker, a good man.

In fact, if you have ever spent enough time to be acquainted with the conversation Satan had with God, you remember how it went. Satan said, I can make him deny you. He is a good man but I can make him deny you.

And God said, I've got so much confidence in him, there's not a better man in the East than Job. He'll not deny me. He'd never deny me.

You can do anything to him but kill him. And then the hard times came. I can imagine.

I cannot conceive really of all that went on but I can just imagine a little bit of some of the things. Turn to chapter 3, just chapter 3, and look at verse 1 of chapter 3. Job opened his mouth. Now that's the problem with most of us.

You may recall that in our hard times, we generally do exactly that. We open our mouth. I pastored a woman once.

I never asked her how she felt. She would tell me. Now Job's going to tell us how he feels.

He said, I cursed the day of my birth. And look at verse 11. He said, And since I was born, why did I not die at birth? And look at verse 20.

Why is light given to him who suffers and life to the bitter of soul who longed for death but there is none? Look at verse 25. For what I fear comes upon me and what I dread befalls me. I am not at ease nor am I quiet.

I am not at rest, but turmoil comes on me. That's hard times. That's tough.

That's not, you know, it doesn't make any difference what Jim Baker says. That's tough. Some of you are there today.

It just doesn't matter. Friend, it's hard. And they can talk to you about thinking positive, and Mr. Shuler can tell you how wonderful it is, and it's not.

It's rough. It's tough. It's hard times.

And you're here today, and you're saying, Oh, God, I wish there was an antibiotic I could take for hard times. You see, there are for infections, there are antibiotics, and we've got all kinds of medicines, but nobody's ever come up for some kind of a something we could take in the hard times. They are inescapable.

Number two, they're inexplicable. I mean by that you can't explain them. You just can't do it.

Job, he spends so much of his frustrations trying to explain all of this. You see, Job is basically saying, I have come to the place in my circumstances, in my situation, I have come to the place where I've put my faith in God. I'm faithful to God.

I do my best for God. I try to live for God, and some of you do too. You know, I had a call this week from a preacher, as fine a preacher, a dear and dedicated man, and his church is forcing him to leave.

That's hard times for that preacher. I'm telling you, some of you are sitting here today, and you're saying, I, like Job, I could say from my heart, I've had faith in God. I've tried to be good.

I've tried to do my best. I'm faithful to my church. I come as best I know how.

I do what I know to do, and yet I'm in the middle of a bunch of hard times. What under God? I don't understand it all. Have you ever heard a child say, well, I don't know why this, I don't know why this, why didn't this happen to him? Have you ever heard anybody, when they'd give a tornado report, and they'd say, well, thank God it tore that town up, didn't bother ours.

You see, that's kind of immaturity, but that's the attitude. And then when we get to be adults, we begin to ask questions like, why? Why did this happen to me? And now you keep in mind, it'll never leave you the same, folks. Hard times will either make you bitter, or they will make you better.

They will never leave you the same. And Job couldn't understand all of that. In the midst of it all, when you begin to comprehend a little bit of it, you can grasp just a little bit of this unexplainable, inexplicable kind of circumstance.

You see, the simplistic philosophy of life, with his friends. He had three friends, and for seven days, they came and just sat there. Now, that's good.

Now, that helps in the hard times. If you've got a friend that'll just come and sit there. The problem came when the friends started talking.

See, if they'd have just kept their mouth shut and just sat there, it'd have helped a lot. But after seven days, they talked. You know what they said? Job, what bad thing have you done? You must have really blew it this time, Job.

Boy, God laid one on you. Here you are sitting in this ash heap, scraping the sores off your old sick body. And there was his wife saying, why don't you curse God and die? And three friends saying, you really messed up, Job.

You really messed up. Job, what in the earth have you done? What bad thing have you done? Oh, you say that's awful. Well, in a sense, it's true.

Now, follow me carefully. The consequences for the life we live, we have to live with those consequences. Amen? That's right.

We just do. You see, in a sense, that's true. You just go out and you say, I'm going to live in illicit sex and drugs and I'm going to throw my life into being an alcoholic or I'm going to do this or I'm going to do that.

Then you're going to have to live with the consequences of that kind of a life. My wonderful friend and the friend of so many of you in this room, Iris Blue, and her health is not good and old Iris loves Jesus with all

her life. But she'd stand up before young people, I've heard her do it time and again, and she'd say, the situation I'm in physically is the consequences of what I did to my body when I was living for the devil.

Now, in a sense, that's true. But I want you to hear me. It is not right or scriptural or of God to talk about the Santa Claus philosophy of our religion.

People say, be good and you'll get good things. If you're bad, then you get bad things. That's the Santa Claus philosophy.

That's the philosophy of those people that say you just name it and claim it. Friend, that is not in the book. For the continuation of this message, please turn the tape to side two.

This inexplicable, unexplainable kind of frustration and his emotions, Job's emotions just, oh, they just went, they were just fluctuating. Job began to wonder about it all. You see, he went from hope to despair.

He started out saying, I'm going to believe God. My troubles, while they're as sure as the sparks that fly upward, and I'm going to believe God. No, I'm not going to curse God and die.

And he started out, and there are those speeches, those declarations, and he prays in those series of, those first speeches five times. Next he just prays once, and next he doesn't pray at all, and his emotions are just going wild, just going wild with hard times. I see through a glass darkly.

I don't understand the man that wrote 40% of the New Testament, said, I cannot explain it, but I can tell you this. I know that all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose, for He is taking us and making us more and more into His image. It's kind of a heavenly sandpaper where God molds us and makes us and designs us more for His image.

And the man that wrote so much of that, if you'll turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, I want you to pick up a wonderful word from the Apostle Paul. It's in verse 16. We do not lose heart.

Oh, I need that, don't you? We don't lose heart. Friend, there are times I just can't, you know, no matter what they write in that book on positive thinking, I don't think positive. I need a word from God.

I need a word from the Lord. And here it is. Look at verse 16 in chapter 4 of 2 Corinthians.

We do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, our inner man is being renewed day by day for momentary light affliction, it's producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. For we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Oh, that's it. That's that marvelous word I needed. The inexplicable hard times.

I'll just keep my eye of faith on the one that said, I'll never leave you nor forsake you. In the midst of the storm, the boat was about to go down, the disciples thought, and the master, when they woke him up, he made that troubled water lay down like a lap dog. And then he turned around to those disciples and said, Where is your faith? That's the question.

In the midst of not knowing, where is your faith? My hope, where is it? In these unexplainable hard times. They're inescapable and they're unexplainable. I cannot realize nor know all of the answers, but I'll tell you they're invaluable.

Look at chapter 42 one more time. Just look at this. The man has passed through the valley and Job is talking to the Lord.

Isn't it amazing how God talks to us? Do you know God talks to you? Now, you be careful with these folks that say they've got a word of knowledge or something like that. But, friend, when you read this book, that's the best knowledge you need. That's God saying something to you, right? And the Lord said, Job, let me talk to you.

And this is what he talked to him. And Job answered the Lord. Now, look at verse two.

I know that you can do all things. Now, friend, he didn't just say that because he read it in somebody's brochure. He had been to hell and back.

He had gone through hard times. And he said, No purpose can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore, I have declared.

Now, you have to realize when the Bible has a therefore in it, you ought to ask yourself what it's there for. The therefore here is saying all I've been through, all I've experienced, all I've known. Therefore, in light of all these hard times, I declared that which I didn't understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

Hear now, and I will speak. I will ask thee. Do thou instruct me? I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see thee.

The world is all that. He discovered God in the hard times in a way he didn't know him before. And let me remind you of something, folks.

You will learn more about God in the storm than you ever will in the sunshine. That's what he's saying. I discovered God! Two little girls went to the museum in England and they were looking at all those paintings.

There stood old George III just sitting up there, just sitting on his throne in that picture. One little girl turned to her friend and said, What's he doing? She looked at that picture of that king and she said, I don't know. I guess he's just sitting up there raining.

That's what some people think about God. Yeah. They think God's just sitting up there raining.

I want you to know the Lord is my shepherd. He's the God of the now. That's what Job's saying.

He is the God of the now. And when you go through hard times discovering God like that, you make the discovery that there is in him, as Job found, a faith that is invaluable. My faith, my hope built in him.

My wife and I went to New York the other day. When you go, take a lot of money. Boy, I'm broke.

I don't have anything. But we climbed in the elevator and went up 110 floors on that big market building. Did you ever go up there? A man told us, he said, Do you know how they could build a building this tall? Do you know how they could? He said, This island is one big solid rock.

And because there's so much rock here, they dug way down in that rock, and this building, 110 stories high, is buried in the rock. Friend, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I

dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name, on Christ, the solid rock I stand.

All other ground is sinking sand. That's the way you make it through the hard times. The rock, the rock of ages.

He discovered I can put my faith in him, and more than that, he said, This is making me more like Jesus. I'm becoming more, more, more like Jesus. Because you see, folks, now listen close to what I'm going to tell you.

We've got a problem. Too many of us Christians have a problem. We're too quick to shoot our wounded.

When you go through hard times, you become more compassionate. You become more caring. You become more understanding.

When you go through hard times, when our Lord saw the multitudes, Matthew 9, 36, when our Lord saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion. His child had committed suicide. Another lady came and sat by her, didn't say a word, but that lady meant more to her than all the others.

Because the pastor's coming didn't mean as much, as wonderful as that was, nobody else's visit meant as much, because that mother that had come to sit by her and didn't say anything, her child also had committed suicide, and she knew, she understood. Little Mary, little Mary had come home from school, and she said, Mother Martha was back at school today. Oh, I didn't know she'd been gone.

Yes, Martha's mother died. She'd been gone all week, and she's back today. We said, Honey, what did Martha do? Oh, Mama, she just put her head down on her desk.

What'd you do, honey? Little Mary said, I just put my head down on my desk. That's what hard times will do for you folks. If you've got faith in the God who gave his Son, it'll not only deepen your faith, but it'll put a love in your soul and understanding in your spirit for other people.

Did you ever go down in Carlsbad Caverns? Did you? You don't know what I'm talking about, huh? Do you know where New Mexico is? Did you ever go down in Carlsbad Caverns? Yeah, did you? Oh, were you ever there when they used to turn the lights out and sing Rock of Ages? Boy, that's pretty, but it was dark, wasn't it? A little girl was down there, and her little brother was scared. They were singing that song, and in that darkness, she reached through it, and she got him by the hand, and she said, Little Brother, don't you be afraid. We've got somebody with us that knows how to turn the lights on.

Folks, we've got the light of the world with us. Jesus, it may be dark, your particular circumstances when you came to this church today. It's tough.

It's rough. Maybe you're facing a divorce. Maybe you just had a word from the doctor.

Your health is horribly and terribly and awfully impaired. Maybe the terrible word, cancer. Maybe you've got children that are breaking your heart.

Maybe you young people, it's just so awful. Some of the things you're dealing with today, you're in the midst of hard times. And to you, life is the pits.

Is there any answer? Job said, I knew in my head, but now that I've fixed my eyes upon God, I know that my God can do all things. My God can meet all my needs. I know, Job said.

I know that what I've passed through, it was inescapable. It is inexplicable. But thank God, it is invaluable.

Do you know what your troubles are for? Do you know what your hard times are for? James told you what they were for. They're for your enlargement. That's right.

He said, they'll make us mature in the Lord. James said, in the first chapter you can read it. They're for our enjoyment, our hard times.

You mean to tell me I'm supposed to enjoy them? Well, the philosophy of life is, what can't be cured has just got to be endured. You ever heard that? Oh, I saw, I could, oh. You know why some people don't want what we've got? They don't think it works.

They know us, and they don't think it works. But friend, if we believe what I'm telling you from the book today, we can even enjoy our hard times. Our hard times are for our endurance, because it grows us in the Lord.

And our hard times, bless God forever, it's for our enrichment. God's not mad at you and is going to get you. God's not running around trying to say, I see you, and I'm going to lay it on you.

No, God wants to provide your needs according to his riches in glory. What's your attitude toward all this? Will you close your eyes for just a moment? No one leaving unless it's an absolute emergency. Now listen carefully to what I'm going to say to you.

One of my colleagues said to me last week, Carlos, I think the reason we're going through some hard times economically in our state right now is that we've been praying for spiritual awakening. We've been praying for God to move. We've been praying for God to do something, and God is using all this to get our attention.

Well, I'll tell you one thing, friend, whether it's economy or health or whatever else it is, if God has to use it for us to have a teachable moment, then I pray God the hard times will come. We must get back to God. That's what Job's life was about.

You've got to get back to God.

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