

2. THE THINGS THAT SHOULD DESTROY US

Hunger, divorce, physical abuse and hardship will not destroy you. Only sin can destroy you.

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

THE THINGS THAT SHOULD DESTROY US

James 1:2-4: "Consider it pure joy my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds; knowing this, that the trying of your faith will work for patience and let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and entirely perfect, wanting nothing."

There are things in this world that are supposed to destroy us, but I'd like to state that the only thing in this world that can really destroy us, is sin. Satan wants to bind us in sin and he uses hardships to do so. God, on the other hand, wants to set us free and He can also use hardships to do so.

There are many names for hardship. We might call it a terrible darkness in our lives, or an all-consuming fire, or a treacherous river that we have to pass through, or perhaps a barren land that we have to scale. The times of hardship often make us feel abandoned. They hurt us, they suffocate us and make us feel like we cannot breathe. They leave us thirsting and aching for relief. Have you ever experienced such hardships? If your answer is yes, it means not only have you experienced these hardships, but you've also survived them.

COVID-19 comes to us in the form of a hardship and it brings many trials into the lives of God's people. The worries that we are facing now, are not just from the COVID-19 pandemic – the normal everyday hardships and trials unfortunately did not leave us either. Many of you might face more than one trial at this time. May be:

- your finances were already an issue;
- your marriage might be struggling;

**HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED
HARDSHIP? IF YES THEN THAT
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IT.**

- your superiors at work want you to turn a blind eye to their misgivings and misleadings;
- your children are addicted to substances or other things;
- it could even be your own sinful tendencies that are at a high point at this stage of your life.

Satan knows your normal everyday trials and sinful proclivities. He hopes that, if he places you in darkness or if he places you in a fire, your sinful characteristics will come out; that the sin and faults that are in you and that are hidden, will come out to be seen.

I have good news for you today. Satan may set the stage for your destruction, but when we serve God, He takes over the stage and He uses it to set us free. Some of you may be in one of these destructive situations right now where Satan is attempting to destroy you. Have you ever prayed and asked God to remove these hardships from your life? I know that I have. Perhaps you are one of those who have prayed and asked God nót to remove the hardships, as James did when he prayed: "Lord, leave the hardships, but help me to endure this trial and make me strong to go through it." The book of James, as we have read in the beginning, explains that hardships and trials make us grow stronger in our faith and in our character. Lessons that are learnt under pressure are often more valued and often not forgotten or repeated.

There is a story about a bird that tells us how hardships help us to grow. This little bird, while his cage was full of light, never sang the song his master would teach him. He would listen and would learn a snatch of this, a trill of that, but never a separate and entire melody. His master then covered his cage with a cloth and there, in the dark, the bird listened to the one song his master sang. The bird tried it and tried it again, until the song was learned and he broke forth in perfect melody. Then the cage was uncovered and the distractions were no longer disturbing him from singing the song perfectly. Thereafter he sang the song in full light.

**THE ONLY THING IN LIFE THAT
CAN TRULY DESTROY YOU IS SIN.**

This could be how God deals with His creatures. He has a song of faith to teach us and when we have learnt this amidst deep sorrow and affliction, we can sing the song of faith ever afterward. We will not be distracted by the small things of life which take us away from growing in our faith and our strength.

There is a saying: 'What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger.' This saying leaves a bit of an uncomfortable feeling in me. But you know, when it comes to trials we really do need a different perspective. We need to learn how to react to the trials and how to look at the bigger picture of what they can achieve in our lives.

In gym-life there is an expression that goes: 'Pain is your friend.' What! Pain, my friend? Well, the Bible is also full of apparent contradictions. Things that seem to be awful and horrible, actually are there to sustain us and to make us stronger and help us to grow. James says we should be happy in trial. An apparent contradiction. Solomon also notes an apparent contradiction when mhe says: *"Cast your bread upon the waters and after many days it shall return to you"* (Ecclesiastes 11:1). *Matthew writes in chapter 16:25: "For whoever wants to save his own life, will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."* Excuse me! What! Humanly, this doesn't make sense.

It is natural for us to want to survive, for us to want to save our lives, to want to try and persevere through whatever we can, to protect ourselves, to defend ourselves against people and things that threaten to destroy our livelihoods. Yes, Satan is on the path of destruction. He wants to destroy us. In John 10:10 Jesus tells us: *"The thief cometh not, but for to steal and to kill and to destroy; but I have come that you may have life, and that you may have it in more abundance."*

**PAIN IS YOUR FRIEND. WE OFTEN
HURT BECAUSE OF GROWTH PAINS.**

Luke 9:56 also talks about God: "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (KJV). There are two things happening in the world right now. Satan wants to destroy us and Jesus wants to save us. We should not fear. The Bible gives us a message in Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." This verse is not there to scare us into following Jesus. This verse is basically there to tell us that instead of us focusing on Satan's destruction, we should focus on the saving grace of Christ Jesus. We should not focus on what Satan is doing, but on what God can do. God can save the soul eternally.

It is true that Satan can cause a lot of destruction on this earth, but Jesus can transform that destruction into our redemption. Think about it this way: the things that are supposed to destroy us, can set us free. The Bible shares examples of this. The Israelites, while they were in Egypt, were suffering many cruelties under Pharaoh. It was Satan's intent purpose to destroy God's people by hard labour, by putting them under severe stress in order to remove their minds from the work of God in their lives. Instead of them forgetting God, they called out to God for deliverance and God set them free. Yes, Satan is on the path of destruction. He wants to destroy us. In John 10:10 Jesus tells us: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal and to kill and to destroy; but I have come that you may have life, and that you may have it in more abundance."

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**GOD CAN TURN SATANS DESTRUCTION
INTO YOUR REDEMPTION.**

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Isaiah 43:1-4 says: "Israel, the LORD who created you says, 'Do not be afraid – I will save you. I have called you by your name - you are mine. When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burnt; the hard trials that come will not hurt you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy God of Israel, who saves you. I will give up whole nations to save your life, because you are precious to me and because I love you and give you honour.'" We need to learn to "keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

Satan knows that his time is short and he wants to destroy us. He's out for our physical destruction. He attacks our bodies and our health. Sometimes he even wants to kill us physically. He's out for our mental and spiritual destruction as well. His mental and spiritual destruction are more worrying, because physical destruction is obvious. Satan works in little ways to destroy us mentally and spiritually. He uses things we are not aware of. Things like television or radio programmes. Remember the saying: 'It's the little foxes that spoil the crops.'

The question that you need to ask yourself today is whether you should be worried about the obvious trials, or should you be more worried about the non-obvious trails which Satan uses to get into your life? There is a tongue in the cheek question sometimes asked: 'How do you cook a frog?' Satan used to try and destroy people by physically going after them and attacking them, making them martyrs, trying to destroy Christians by killing them.

GOD SAYS: "DO NOT BE AFRAID, I WILL SAVE YOU. I HAVE CALLED YOU BY NAME AND YOU ARE MINE."

Today he is much cleverer. Satan does not only use physical destruction and trials when trying to destroy you, he uses subtle ways you're unaware of. How do you cook a frog? Slowly. You put it in cold water and slowly turn up the heat. This is what Satan is doing to you and me.

The physical trials we go through shouldn't worry us. We might go hungry, but will not destroy us. We might lose our spouses to divorce, but it will not destroy us. We might not have an education or a job, but it will not destroy us. Being beaten and persecuted will not destroy us. Even dying will not destroy us. But what will destroy us, are our own thoughts and emotions and our actions in response to hardships and trials. The battle in this life is not for our body or our lives, it is for our minds. If Satan can break us emotionally, cognitively and spiritually, then he has won.

Remember, pain is temporary. Do not focus on the pain. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew that the fire was going to be made seven times hotter. But what was more important to them than the fear of dying or the fear of pain, was that God was their Saviour. They knew God could preserve them if He chooses to do so. Their focus was not on defending themselves or saving themselves, but it was on God and His power. It is not our job to save ourselves. We have a Saviour that is working for our salvation.

What we should do, is to face the trials. Trials will help us to exercise our faith so that we can grow in our faith. In order for muscles to grow, a severe amount of strain must be placed on it. Muscles tear, but they grow back stronger. This process also involves pain. We need to realise that in order for our faith muscles to grow, we may sometimes find ourselves in strenuous circumstances where life apparently tears us down. What is important during these times, is that we exercise our faith in God and therefore our spiritual muscles grow back stronger.

**HUNGER, DIVORCE, A LACK EVEN
PERSECUTION CANT DESTROY YOU,
ONLY SIN CAN.**

There are different seasons in our lives. Like the seasons in nature, pain will come and go. There will be winter and it will be cold, but I promise you, there will be a summer.

If you are broke right now, it won't always be that way. If you are sick right now, it won't always be that way. It is only a season that will pass. There will be showers of blessings too. God is in control of the seasons of our lives and whatever you are going through right now, cannot last. Life may change, but what should not change, is our focus on God during these changing times. Don't give up on that which is permanent, for problems that are temporary. You are not losing anything in the hardships of life, except those things that are holding you back.

Allow me to share the following dialogue that talks about how we fall apart. It is a conversation between myself and God:

Me: "Hello God."

God: "Hello."

Me: "Lord, I'm falling apart. Can You please put me back together?"

God: "I would rather not."

Me: "Why?"

God: "Because you aren't a puzzle."

Me: "What about all the pieces of my life that are falling down onto the ground!"

God: "Let them stay there for a while. They fell off for a reason. Take some time and decide if you need any of those pieces back."

Me: "You don't understand God, I am breaking down."

God: "No, you don't understand. You are breaking through."

What you are feeling are just growing pains. You are shedding the things and the people in your life that are holding you back. You aren't falling apart,

**THERE WILL BE DIFFERENT SEASONS
IN LIFE. LEARN TO SEE THE BEAUTY
IN EACH.**

you are falling into place. Relax! Take some deep breaths and allow those things that you don't need anymore to fall off of you.

Quit holding on to the pieces that don't fit you anymore. Let them fall off. Let them go."

Me: "Once I start doing that Lord, what will be left of me?"

God: "Only the very best pieces of you."

Me: "I'm scared of changing, God."

God: "I keep telling you: YOU AREN'T CHANGING! YOU ARE BECOMING!!"

Me: "Becoming who?"

God: "Becoming who I created you to be! A person of light and love and charity and hope and courage and joy and mercy and grace and compassion. I made you for more than the shallow pieces you have decided to adorn yourself with and cling to with such greed and fear. Let those things fall off of you. I love you! Don't change! Become! Become! Become! Become who I made you to be. I'm going to keep telling you this until you remember it."

Me: "There goes another piece, Lord."

God: "Yip, let it be."

Me: "So ... I'm not broken?"

God: "No ... but you are breaking like the dawn. It is a new day. Become who I made you to be."

May the Lord bless you today as you allow the trials of life to mould you and help you to become who God intended you to be.

**GOD WANTS YOU TO HAVE AN
ABUNDANT LIFE**

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A silhouette of a woman's head facing left, filled with a bouquet of colorful flowers including red, blue, and yellow blooms.

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