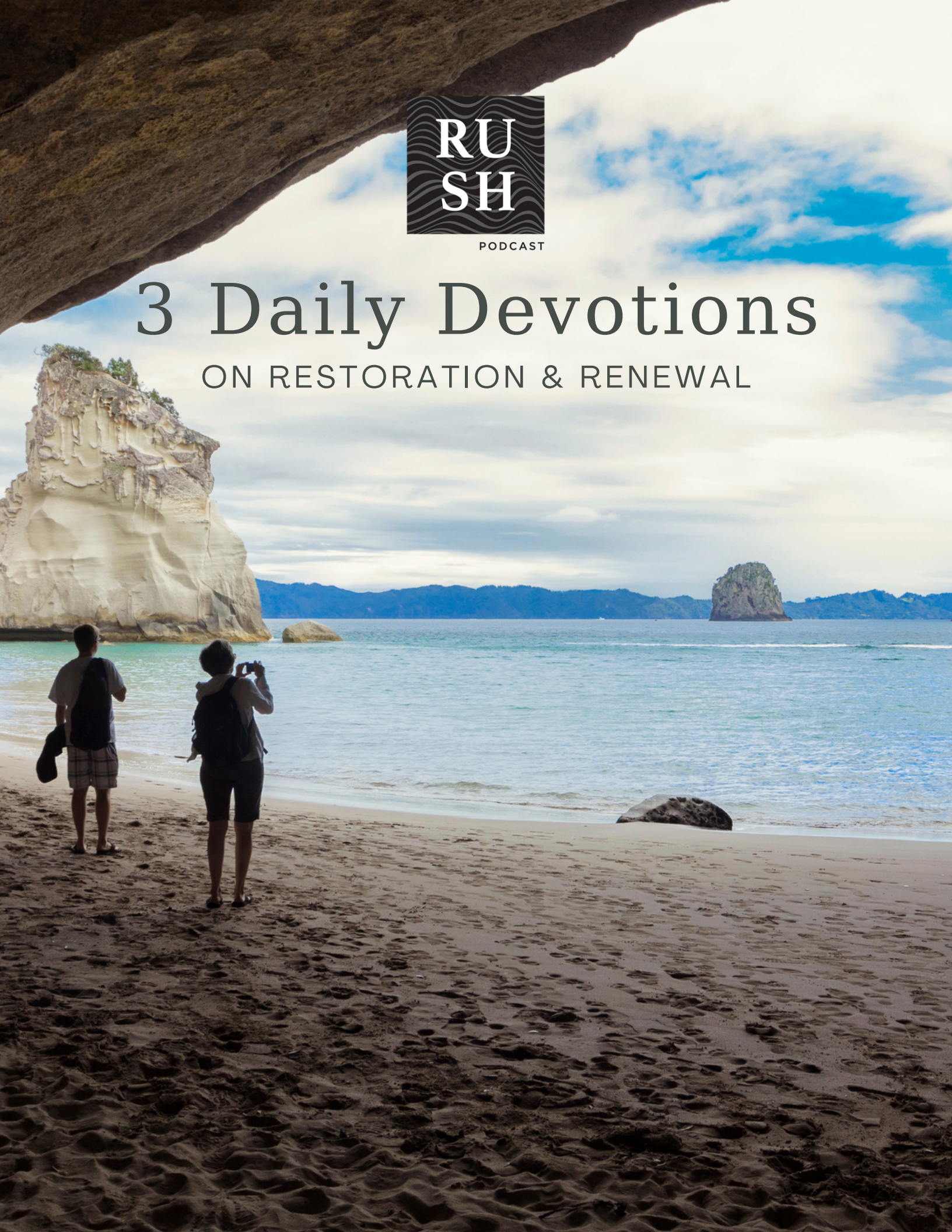




3 Daily Devotions

ON RESTORATION & RENEWAL



Restoring the Kingdom

MESSAGE :

I am not such a mystery that you can't find me. Where do you want to go today? What do you want to do? Are you confident in your own opinions? Have you owned the truth that I am in you, right now? That we can collaborate? Where I go . . . where you go . . . *we* go too.

You are not alone. *You are not alone*. Just like I am never alone, my Jesus and my God with me always, you can always be guided. You can always be helped. This day, with my power in you, can be so different, if you want it to be. But not different because my guidance will give you what you think you want. It will be different because your turning to Me with your desires will show you that you are limited in your thinking. Push deeper. Push wider. Push farther. I have so much more for you—beyond what your eyes can see and your hands can touch. Do you want me to show you . . . right now?

This world needs to be restored. And you, with Me, are the restorer. Do you want to pray heaven down? Do you want my will to be done on earth as it is in heaven? Then work with Me. Move mountains with Me. Surrender your limited imagination—your small, small faith. Let me replace it with mine.

I give you a new way of thinking of perceiving, of being. Your mindset right now is too limited. Let's revamp it. Let's expand it. Let's clear through the clutter of doubt and second-guessing and regret. With Me all things are possible. With Me all things can be restored. What are you holding onto that your fear and doubt have made your faith so, so small?

I want to trust you with more. I want to give you more. More of Me. More of my power in you. I want you to walk with me, expect Me, look for Me and see where I am. Why, why do you trust me so little? Try Me. Listen for Me. Watch my goodness change you and flood through every part of your mind, your life, your home. Do not forget that your strength lies in the breaking down of walls for other people, and in your own life, so that new structures of hope and healing can be built.

Why wait for heaven to come when it is here, right here, waiting for you ? Why not be impatient for change, eager for hope to turn all things new? I am here. I am here. All I have is available to you. All I have is yours. All I am is in you. All my love. All my power. All my goodness. All my kindness. All my strength. I adore you. I adore this world. I fight for it—have fought for it—and I want you to stand with Me, claim the role you are meant to play with Me, as the restorer. I ask you to play the role you are made to play.

Do you want to know what a restorer does? It takes what is hiding, what is broken, what is tired and desperate and weak, and it brings it back to life. It takes hold of what has been forgotten and it shines on it the truth of light. It gives light, it gives hope. It gives strength. It gives a new way of being—an existence, a truth, that had been forgotten. The restorer *brings it back*. It makes things beautiful again.

Come, here; let's do this together. Let's restore hearts and minds and bodies and dreams, Let's restore families and relationships. Let's restore this aching, desperate, hurting world. And let's start with you. For you can believe in the way I see.



EXERCISE :

Our default position is often, “What can *I* do?” Looking at all the pain in the world, we think, “What difference can *I* make?” And this position is understandable until we consider this: The most powerful force in the world dwells within us, and that force is a person, and that person has chosen us and called us to be part of the most important work in the world.

So here is the truth: you *can* change the world because you are *not* alone . . . because Jesus has come . . . because Holy Spirit empowers you to make a difference, one act of faith at a time.

In the message you just read, Holy Spirit says, “This world needs to be restored. And you, with Me, are the restorer.” “Do you want to pray heaven down?,” He asked. “Do you want my will to be done on earth as it is in heaven? Then work with Me. Move mountains with Me.”

Do you believe, really believe, you can move mountains—emotional, psychological, even physical obstacles? Things that are immense and intimidating and impossible? Do you believe you carry God’s power in you? Do you believe that you carry within yourself, right now, the very same power that raised Jesus from the dead?

Here are the words of John the Apostle: “You see, every child of God overcomes the world, for our faith is the victorious power that triumphs over the world.” That’s from 1 John chapter 5.

God’s love in us enables us to do the impossible. To restore what’s been broken in this world—broken hearts, broken relationships, broken homes. All it takes is a partnership: *His* grace partnered with *our* obedience. Loads and loads of grace partnered our small acts of faith. Our small acts in the opposite of what culture and our weak flesh want us to do.

But for us to be able to partner with Holy Spirit best in this work of restoring the world, we first need to let Him restore us. He said, right now, our mindset is too limited, our dreams too small. So He invites us to let Him “clear through the clutter of doubt and second-guessing and regret.”

He'll come, if we let Him, and He'll restore the things that are broken in your life—so that you can move into deeper relationship with Him, into deeper union—and so that you can join Him in His work.

Do you believe that Jesus will come for you? . . . in your particular situation? . . . in your relationships? . . . in your job? . . . in your finances? . . . in your doubt?

In the message you just read, Holy Spirit asks us this question: “What are you holding onto that your fear and doubt have made your faith so, so small?”

Let's approach that same question from a slightly different angle, and let's ask our Jesus this: *What are the lies I'm believing about You or about Father God or about Holy Spirit . . . or about myself?*

What thoughts came into your mind? What pictures? What words?

Now, ask yourself, did those thoughts fit within the principles of Scripture? And if they did not, let them go, let them fall away, right now. But if they did, if your thoughts pointed you toward lies that need to be broken, toward wounds that need to be healed, then let's invite Jesus in. Let's invite Jesus to restore what's been broken in your life.

Jesus, I renounce the lies I've been believing. With the authority I have because you dwell inside me, I take the lies that have made my faith small, and I break them, in your name. I break them now. And I ask You to come, come with a season of teaching and a season of healing. Teach me what is true. Take me by the hand and show me. And care for my wounds. Heal the wounds that gave rise to these lies. Heal the wounds that were made worse by my wrong beliefs and my wrong actions. I want a deeper relationship with You, a deeper union—and I want to join You in Your work, in the restoration of all things. But restore me first, Jesus. Do the impossible in me.

Now, stay in this moment for a bit longer. Stay here in the presence of Jesus. And consider His goodness and power—and His . . . inevitability. There's a new album coming out from one of our favorite bands: Iron Bell Music. The title track on the album is called “Glory to Glory,” and in the song there is this line: “If it's not beautiful yet, it's gonna be.”

He *is* going to restore what's broken—in *your life and in the world*. For He who began these good works, will bring them to completion.



Scrap the Old Way of Living

MESSAGE :

What is it you search for, if it isn't for Me? Why do you say you search for Me when you look for what is evil everywhere you turn? You think about how to get ahead, how to please, how to be successful, how to get more things done in a day. You think about how to get people to think well of you, how to twist truth so it serves your interests. You find it expedient to do things so the outcome is fitting for you, for your terms. You are self-focused, and your perspective of life is limited by your lack of faith, your self-focused heart.

I have come that you might know what is true and what is good. I have come that you will see that there is more to life than trying to figure out the puzzle of success. That there is more to this life than working for yourself. That there is more to this life than pretending you are doing good for others when you haven't yet satisfied the desires of your hungry heart.

I have come to bring rescue for your heart. To fill the empty places that you have ignored for so long. You can't fill them yourself, you see. You can't fill a well with water that is poison and expect it to be nourishing when you are thirsty. You can't expect to fill your days with striving and working and pretending to do good when you are filled with fear and self-loathing and worry about how you will get ahead.

Your heart is hollow, empty of remorse for your sins when you swallow them up, keep going and committing the sins over and over again without repentance. You are made to turn away from what is evil and instead turn to what is alive and joy-filled and good. But you can't even recognize the good I have for you when it is right in front of you. For you are blind to goodness, deaf to song, immune to true Life when your desire for success in this world is more important than love for Me.

Your spirit is thirsty. Your soul is hungry. But what do you give it to drink? What do you give it to eat? Turn away from the old ways of living and seeing and doing. Turn away from what is not giving you Life. Stop doing the same thing day after day when it is not good for your heart. There is no other chance you will have than this one life I give you. And it is enough. It is more than enough. It is all the time you need.

This day. This day. I am enough for you. This day.

So come, my child, to where the ground is solid. Come, sister, brother, to where the air is sweet. It is not good to focus on the world as it is and expect that that is all there is. It is not good to look to this unrestored earth and think there is not more that is available to you. There is more. There is more. And I am it. *I am* the more. *I am* all you need.

Tear down the old ways—give them to Me, and I will destroy them within you. I will help you to shed the old wineskins and give you new ones. I will replace the old wine with what is new. And you will be filled with Me. You will be restored in Me. You will begin new habits, have new perspective—a new outlook on living that sustains you and emboldens you and refreshes you. For you are made to love with a heart that is glad in Me. And loving Me means throwing aside the old ways. There is not room for them anymore. So don't wait. Don't second-guess. Don't try to work around these simple words I say. I have come for you. Right here. Right now. Drop the old things you carry so I can give you new things to believe in, love, and do.



EXERCISE :

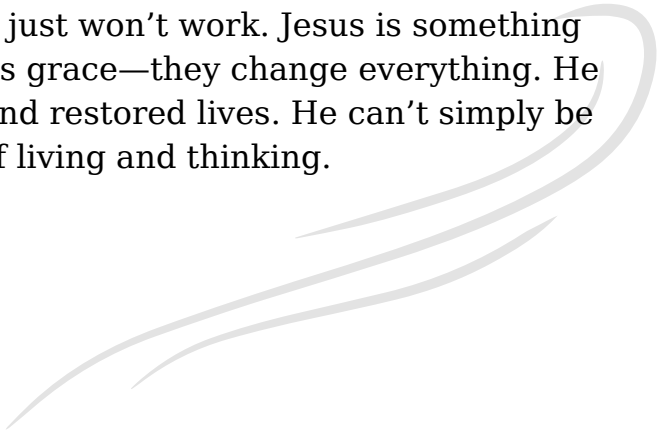
We like to have things our way, don't we? We like what Jesus offers. But we try to layer His teaching onto our existing lives. We try to patch Jesus' new, good ideas onto lives that we, if we're honest, are not really willing to change.

But it doesn't work. Saying yes to Jesus is something different. It is more than saying yes to some good ideas—because grace is involved; because His resurrection power is involved. Jesus offers an all-encompassing, all-consuming new and different kind of life—a life, while not immune to problems and trials and suffering—far from it—that gives us the hope and joy and peace we've always been looking for, and which we cannot find any place else. Following Him means embracing these new lives and letting go of our old ones. It means throwing out our old ways so that new life can flourish.

Do you remember Jesus' teaching, in the book of Luke, about what happens if we try to use a patch, made of new fabric, on a garment that is old? He said the new fabric wouldn't match. It would want to shrink in a way the old fabric would not—and it would tear off . . . probably making the original tear even worse.

And, similarly, He taught about what happens if we put new wine into an old wineskin: the new wine will expand when it ferments and the old wineskin, which is worn out and unable to flex anymore, would burst and the new wine would be lost.

Both of these parables are in Luke chapter 5, and they are meant to impress upon us how trying to grab hold of a few good ideas from Jesus and to add them on to what we already believe—it just won't work. Jesus is something completely new; His truth, His Way, His grace—they change everything. He offers healed hearts, renewed minds, and restored lives. He can't simply be merged and mixed with our old ways of living and thinking.



But we live in a culture that tries to do that, don't we? We treat life like a buffet. We try to grab maybe a bit of pop psychology, a tiny bit of Eastern religious practice maybe, big scoops of works-based theology and stubborn idolatry, and some street smart cynicism too. And then we squeeze the truth of Jesus over there, onto one corner of our plate—a side portion on an overflowing platter that we can barely manage to hold.

To follow Jesus means surrendering the old lives we've been living—with all our old belief systems and all our flawed thinking. Because Jesus wants our whole hearts, not just a small part of them. He wants His healing and goodness and love to penetrate and saturate our entire beings and every part of our lives—not just those portions we think we're comfortable with.

Taking us a level deeper, Graham Cooke narrowed in on the Greek word Jesus used to describe the old wineskin in the parable. Cooke wrote: "You can't tell in the English, but Jesus is making a point with a play on words. He doesn't use the traditional word for old, which is *palai*. *Palai* means 'antique.' Sort of like 'vintage.' It's a good kind of old. Instead, he uses the word *palaios*, which implies that something is useless and worn out."

Jesus is offering you new wine. He is offering you new life, much better than your existing life. But you can't accept it with old wineskin. If we try to hold onto old sins, old idols, old habits, old, worn out ways of thinking, while trying to add in the teaching of Jesus—the stuff that feels comfortable and convenient to us; the stuff that we think might work into our existing lives—something is going to break. The truth and grace of Jesus are just too powerful. And our old ways are useless and worn out. They simply cannot contain the glory and power of Jesus. Our old wineskins are going to burst.

So, says Cooke, the "only question is, how long are you going to keep trying to hold onto the old?"

Consider the ways in which you've been trying to keep hold of your old sin, your old idols, your old habits, your old ways of thinking—while, at the same time, trying to say yes to new life from Jesus.

You might ask yourself this question: How do you feel stuck? What's obviously old and worn out in your life, but hard to let go of, too?

What are your old wineskins? Try to name them. And then offer them to Jesus—and ask for His help in letting them go.

Now come up with one change you can make, starting today, to begin the process of getting rid of the old wineskins in your life. What's one thing you can do, now, to partner with Holy Spirit to overcome the sin and idols and bad habits and wrong thinking in your life?

Jesus, help me get rid of my old ways. They've become useless to me; worn out. So, I'm done delaying and negotiating. I'm done second-guessing. I'm done trying to work You and Your teaching into my old life. You offer me an entirely new life, and I want to have it. I want to embrace it. I want all of it. So, help me. I will do whatever I need to do to walk in the new.

In Your name, Jesus, Amen.



The Fruit of Perseverance

MESSAGE :

May I tell you a story? Once upon a time there was a man, He had many sons. The first son liked to lie in the garden while the sun warmed his face, his hands, his back. The second son liked to work, and he worked in the heat and the wind, the snow and the frost. He was steadfast and withstood many seasons of hardship; he toiled and did not falter. Another son enjoyed the fruit of his brother's labor. He did not work but ate the harvest with relish, thinking little of the sacrifice the middle brother withstood to produce a harvest that supplied everything the family needed.

I want you to be like the brother who worked with steadfastness, intent on the riches of your labor producing good harvest. For you have been given much, and with what you have been given more can be grown. But there are many trials to withstand for the harvest to be plentiful. And if you persevere, despite hardship, despite obstacles, despite challenges that feel daunting and impossible to withstand, it is the fruit of our Father's hand you will reap. You will experience the fruit of life that is sweeter than anything handed to you without toil. For what you have been given--by my sacrifice--allows you to withstand any trial, any suffering. I have done it first. And what I give you is the gift of life that lasts forever.

What you experience now, with the hardship you face, is not more than you can stand. Because of my love for you, I do not leave you. And I carry any burden with you. When you suffer, I suffer. When you toil, I help carry the load. It is my promise to you that my love is enough to satisfy all your needs and desires. But it isn't easy to believe this. It isn't easy to choose faith and love and goodness when worry and pride and self-sufficiency propel you to carry the weight of your burdens on your own.

You forget me, over and over and over again. But I love you. So I give you everything. But to receive this *everything*, you have to see with eyes that see, hear with ears that hear. The trials in front of you are not strong enough that I can't help you. Do you want help? Do you want strength? Do you want hope? Do you want to receive *the everything* I have for you right now? Then do this: when you grow weary of this world, and the trials feel too great, do not falter in your pursuit of Me. In the hardship, in the persecution, in the financial stress, in the relationship battles, I never leave your side. My goodness and mercy follow you everywhere. There is not one place they do not go--not when you let me help you withstand the trials and suffering of this world.

And how do you let Me help you? You go forward--choosing love and kindness and compassion--no matter what challenge you face. You persist in choosing to love. You stay steadfast in showing mercy. You are a rock weathered against the storm, solid and sure, knowing that I am with you and that what you have been given from Me can never, never, be taken away. The obstacles, the problems, the troubles of this world are no match for Me--which means they are no match for you. You are resilient and strong and capable. Your efforts to endure hardship succeed because you do not do it alone.

Watch what fruit is produced when you choose to partner with Me in this life rather than going it alone. I want you to experience life that is rich and full. Because I love you. So, don't give up. My love for you is steadfast, enough for you. Always, always enough.



EXERCISE:

The enemy is quick with this lie: That what we are going through is just too much. That we won't survive it. That we don't have what it takes to persevere. And the lie feels so true when we're in the midst of some struggle.

And so, very often, we stop doing what we're made to do. We stop looking for help from Jesus. We try to go it alone by *coping* alone. We isolate and look for escape. We deny and run and numb ourselves to the pain and fear—when what we're meant to do is stand in them. What we're *meant* to do, and made to do, is stand and face these trials, these obstacles—*but not alone*.

What percentage of your life, what percentage of your week this week, what percentage of today, will you spend with the mindset that you are alone in your struggles, in whatever you are facing? Take a moment, and be honest.

Here is what the apostle Paul says 2 Corinthians, chapter 4: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."

Eugene Peterson translated Paul's words from this chapter like this: "If you only look at us, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with *us*. As it is, there's not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we're not much to look at. We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken."



What they did to Jesus, they do to us—trial and torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, he does in us—he lives! Our lives are at constant risk for Jesus’ sake, which makes Jesus’ life all the more evident in us. While we’re going through the worst, you’re getting in on the best! We’re not keeping this quiet, not on your life. Just like the psalmist who wrote, ‘I believed it, so I said it,’ we say what we believe. And what we believe is that the One who raised up the Master Jesus will just as certainly raise us up with you, alive. Every detail works to your advantage and to God’s glory: more and more grace, more and more people, more and more praise!”

Every detail—every detail of your struggle, every detail of your pain—every detail works to your advantage. Those details are meant for you, *to be experienced*. They are not meant to be ignored or escaped or anesthetized. So we must stand. *You must stand*. In the midst of hardship, you *can* stand. Because you carry the life of Jesus within you. You carry the Spirit of God within your very being. You are filled with His “incomparable power.” You can be shaken, but you cannot be brought down. For remember, God hasn’t left your side. And He is the One who “always knows what to do” even if you don’t.

So, even more than standing in the midst of our struggles, we can praise Him in the midst, too.

There is an amazing new song by Katie and Bryan Torwalt called “Praise Before My Breakthrough.” It invites us to turn to God in the midst of things that are hard or in the face of things we don’t understand.

As you read the lyrics of the song, be sure to notice which lines stand out to you—notice which ones speak to your heart:

I know the tension of the now
I don't always understand
I don't always get to see
Everything

When I'm holding up my hands
When I'm counting every breath
Lord, all I need to know is
You choose me
You choose me



I'll praise before my breakthrough
'Til my song becomes my triumph
I will sing because I trust You
I will bring my heart, I will lift my song

When I'm listening for Your voice
And I'm shutting out the noise
I know that You will speak
Clearly

When I'm living out my faith
When I'm stepping on the sea
I know You take my hand and
Walk with me
Walk with me

I'll praise before my breakthrough
'Til my song becomes my triumph
I will sing because I trust You
I will bring my heart, I will lift my song

He who came in power, He will come again
He who heals the sick, won't He move again
He who raised the dead, won't He raise again
And I will sing, I will sing

He who came in power, He will come again
He who heals the sick, won't He move again
He who raised the dead, won't He raise again
I will sing, I will sing
Oh I will sing, I will sing

Jesus, thank you that You are here, with me, as I face these things. Thank you that You help me. You help me go forward, choosing love and kindness and mercy—no matter how difficult the challenge. Thank you that, because of You, I can stand and feel, that I can experience this hardship and survive. And thank you for the fact that hardship actually makes me better. Thank you for the words of your brother, James:

“ . . . when it seems as though you are facing nothing but difficulties see it as an invaluable opportunity to experience the greatest joy that you can! For you know that when your faith is tested it stirs up power within you to endure all things. And then as your endurance grows even stronger it will release perfection into every part of your being until there is nothing missing and nothing lacking.”

I love You, Jesus. I trust You. I will partner with You in this life, and I'll try not to try to go it alone, not anymore. I want to experience life—life that is rich and full. I want to experience all of it—not just the easy parts. And I will praise. I will praise You, even when I'm right in the middle of hardship.

In Your name, Jesus, I pray. Amen.



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