



EVIDENCE OF GROWTH
Luke 8:22-25; Acts 12:5-8

Woodland Park Church of Christ

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²² Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, “Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.” And they launched out. ²³ But as they sailed He fell asleep. **And a windstorm came down on the lake**, and they were filling *with water*, and were in jeopardy. ²⁴ **And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!”** Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵ **But He said to them, “Where is your faith?”** And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, “Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!”

Luke 8:22-25

⁵ Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. ⁶ **And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers;** and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. ⁷ Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by *him*, and a light shone in the prison; and **he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, “Arise quickly!” And his chains fell off *his* hands.** ⁸ Then the angel said to him, “Gird yourself and tie on your sandals”; and so he did. And he said to him, “Put on your garment and follow me.”

Acts 12:5-8

CONTEXT

- In one instance, Peter among those in the storm and petrified.
- Notwithstanding the fact that they were with the Lord.
- Recall, Peter had proclaimed Jesus Lord in **Luke 5:8** (at the Lake of Gennesaret – Sea of Galilee)
- Those were good times → Great haul of fish; caught so many that their nets began to break; and needed help from their partners to bring in the catch. **Luke 5:6-7**

- However, notice the transformation in Peter, as we travel from Luke 8 to Acts 5.
- Earlier in Acts 5, Herod had just killed James, John's brother; and, because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he was going to take Peter's life as well.
- Peter was awaiting execution; yet he was sound asleep. As if he did not have a care in the world.
- What we see is a man whose faith had grown.
- He goes from being petrified in one life-threatening event to being totally relaxed and worry-free in another.
- **CLEAR EVIDENCE OF GROWTH!**

- It struck me that we can develop that same faith and can reach the same degree of confidence in our lives.
- Some may say, “They were apostles; they walked with the Lord and had special favor!”
- The scripture tells us otherwise; they were flesh like us and subject to the same feelings, emotions and shortcomings as we are.
- Remember on the eve of Jesus’ crucifixion, “all the disciples forsook Him and fled.” **Matthew 26:56**
- John MacArthur → *Twelve Ordinary Men*
- **Also struck me, God uses difficulty to help mold and shape us.**

- Sometimes, it seems that we are at the mercy of the winds and tempests in our lives.
- In scripture, however, we are frequently reminded that this is not the case.
- Hardships and difficulty last but a season.
Luke 8:23-24, Psalm 30:5
- Do not let them sweep you away, seize control of your mind, or dominate your thought.
- Adversity is one of the most powerful forces in life; it can bring out your worst or your best!
- However, **ADVERSITY IS THE FUEL OF GREATNESS → NO ADVERSITY OR STRUGGLE . . . NO GROWTH**

I. God Uses Adversity to Get Our Attention

- Forced to face problems and pressures that are **too big for us to resolve.**
- Tribulations often **reveal our weaknesses, frailty, and limitations,** prompting us to rely on God.
- In this way, God gets our attention.
- When setbacks and challenges come, we should stop, take inventory of the situation, ask God for wisdom, obey His word and trust Him to bring us through.

GIDEON'S VICTORY OVER MIDIAN & ITS ALLIES

- ➔ Gideon mustered an army of 10,000; but God proclaimed that was “too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hands have saved me.’” **Judges 7:2**
- ➔ By 300 men would God grant Israel victory over the Midianites. **See Judges 7:7**
- ➔ The enemies were “lying in the valley as numerous as locusts, their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.” **Judges 7:12**
- ➔ 300 vs. 135,000 → **See Judges 8:10**
- ➔ **In the face of overwhelming odds, Israel triumphed on the strength of God's deliverance.**

II. Adversity Extends an Invitation to Experience God's Power

- Adversity should cause us to desire more of Christ's power in our lives.
- We are reminded that on our own we cannot live in a way that honors God.
 - O LORD, I know the way of man *is* not in himself; *It is* not in man who walks to direct his own steps. **Jeremiah 10:23**
- We must rely on God and receive His grace.
- **NOTHING DRAWS US CLOSER TO GOD LIKE ADVERSITY!**

Because (and when) we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we can proclaim –

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

³⁷ **Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors** through Him who loved us.” Romans 8:35-37

I would have despaired had I not believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living. ¹⁴ **Wait for *and* confidently expect the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for *and* confidently expect the LORD.** Psalm 27:13-14

- ➔ **As God blesses us to overcome each challenge, it should inspire us and give us more confidence and momentum for the next.**
- ➔ **As the hymnist proclaims, “Each victory will help us, some other to win.” See Romans 5:3-5**

III. God Uses Difficulty to Better, Build & Strengthen His Children

- God's children are not strangers to challenges and difficulty (distress, sufferings, disaster, sorrow hardship).
- Unfortunately, these things are frequently our companions and contemporaries on our journey towards Christlikeness.
- The world and the flesh value comfort and ease, and it is natural to detest anything that threatens this notion.
- But God allows adversity for our good and His glory.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the **testing of your faith produces patience.** ⁴ But **let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete,** lacking nothing. **James 1:2-4**

Challenges and difficulty help to make us more complete and functional in the service of God.

Our Lord and Savior became more complete by enduring and overcoming the struggles and challenges in the flesh...

[T]hough He was a Son, **yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.** ⁹ And **having been perfected**, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,
Hebrews 5:7-8



*For by You I can run
against a troop, by my
God I can leap over a
wall.* Psalm 18:29, II Sam. 22:30



Lord's Invitation Extended to All

➤ Be added to the Lord's body

Hear the gospel (**Acts 15:7; I Corinthians 15:1-4**)

Believe (**Acts 15:7; Rom. 10:17**)

Repent (**Acts 2:38**)

Confess (**Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10**)

Be baptized (**Acts 2:38, 8:38**)



Lord's Invitation (cont'd)

- **Be reconciled unto the Lord** (1 John 1:8-9); or
 - **Desire prayer** (James 5:16).
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