

INTRODUCTION

The song that inspired the title of this message was recorded by Nat King Cole, Jerry Lewis, and even Michael Jackson. But the song is much older than that. In 1928, Charlie Chaplin wrote the music for this song for the play "Modern Times," which was made into a movie in 1932. The movie is about how industrial machines were taking the place of workers in the factories. It's a funny but sad movie. In the final scene, Charlie Chaplin is seen with his sweetheart (who was actually his real wife). She is sad, so he points to the corners of her mouth to encourage her to smile. Then the two of them walk off into the sunset while the song plays.

In 1932 Americans desperately needed to smile. Unemployment was at an all-time high as the effects of the Great Depression touched every family. There were a lot of hurting people.

Some of the words of the song are: Smile, though your heart is aching / Smile, even though it's breaking / When there are clouds in the sky / You'll get by.../ If you smile / With your fear and sorrow / Smile and maybe tomorrow / You'll find that life is still worthwhile / If you just...smile...(Words: John Turner and Geoffrey Parsons; Music: Charlie Chaplain).

It's not easy to smile when your heart is aching and breaking. But that's the message we find in I Peter. As you study this wonderful letter, you find three themes keep recurring: salvation, submission, and suffering. Peter has already addressed the topic of suffering three times, but he has more to say beginning in I Peter 4: 12:

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgement to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, "if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" So, then those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

When Peter wrote this letter almost 2,000 years ago, Christians in Rome were arrested, tortured and executed—simply because they were followers of Jesus Christ. While we aren't facing that level of persecution, we still have to deal with suffering that comes from a variety of sources. Your point of suffering may be in a marriage relationship; or a financial problem; or you may be hurting because of the actions of a family member. Your pain may be physical as you struggle with an illness or injury.

In this passage, we find four insights that make it possible for us to suffer with a smile. Remember these four words: expect, connect, interject and reject.

1. EXPECT PAIN—DON'T BE SURPRISED WHEN YOU SUFFER

In verse 12 he writes, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. Sometimes when Christians suffer, they act very surprised. They say, “Why me?” or “I just can’t believe this is happening to me!” Peter tells us not be surprised. Everyone suffers, so you shouldn’t be surprised when it happens. As long as you live in this body, you should expect pain. We have little control over the suffering we encounter. The only thing we can control is how we react to it.

A wise man once said: “Life is ten percent of what happens to you and ninety percent of how you respond to it.” When something painful happens to you, how do you respond? Do you act surprised? Or do you frown and start crying? Or have you learned to smile even when you’re exposed to the naked truth? Get ready, because everyone experiences failure, pain, and defeat. Expect it.

Oh, we often hope things will get better, but they often don’t. But suffering isn’t confined to our generation. People were the same almost 3,000 years ago. The prophet Jeremiah wrote during a time when the Babylonians were coming to capture Jerusalem. His cry of despair sounds appropriate for these days of fear and terrorism. He wrote: “We hoped for peace, but no good has come, for a time of healing but there was only terror.” (Jeremiah 8:15)

On September 11, 2001, we weren’t expecting terrorists to rob us of our sense of security—that’s why it was so painful. It was like a sucker punch in the gut we weren’t ready to take. Today most Americans believe there will be another terrorist attack on American soil. God forbid it will happen, but if it does, Americans will handle it in a different way—it will be expected this time. If we know someone is about to hit us in the stomach, we can tighten our muscles—it still hurts, but not nearly as much as if we we’re slugged unexpectedly.

The same is true of our personal suffering. Prepare to be hurt. Expect pain to come into your life. Peter says, “Don’t be surprised—it’s normal. Another way to suffer with a smile is to:

2. CONNECT YOUR PAIN—YOU SHARE SOMETHING WITH JESUS

In verse 13 Peter tells us we should rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ. That word “participate” is the Greek word “*koinonia*.” It means to share something in common. Whenever you suffer, you should remember that you have something in common with Jesus. He suffered, too. We sometimes want only the delightful benefits of the Christian life, but there is more at stake than mere enjoyment. We are to rejoice when we suffer. That’s not easy, but it’s the same thing the Apostle Paul wrote from prison. While he was suffering, he was smiling. He wrote these words in Philippians 3:10, “I want to know Christ [that’s wonderful] and the power of his resurrection [yeah, gimme some of that] and the fellowship of sharing his suffering, [uh oh, no thanks] becoming like him in his death.” (Philippians 3:10) Paul was saying that whenever he suffered, it reminded him of all the suffering that Jesus endured on the cross when he died for our sins. Once you’ve gone through something painful with someone, there is a bond—a connection that is established. When you’re hurting, you should feel the same way about Jesus. He suffered, so you should connect your pain with His. Jesus not only suffered physical pain, He experienced the emotional pain of betrayal, rejection, ridicule, and injustice.

Richard Wurmbrand was a pastor in Romania who was arrested and tortured for his faith. He spent fourteen years in prison simply because he preached the gospel of Jesus. He said during his torture and imprisonment, he came to understand the suffering of Jesus in way he never would have without suffering. He wrote: "Christians are meant to have the same vocation as their King—that of cross bearer. It is this conscience of a high calling and a partnership with Jesus which brings gladness in tribulations which makes Christians enter prisons for their faith with the joy of a bridegroom entering the bridal room."

I've told the story before of the time when I was working as a teenager at a sawmill and as I was pulling off some green lumber, a huge splinter punctured my work glove and lodged several inches deep between two of my fingers. The pain was excruciating. As they took me to the emergency room, I remember distinctly thinking, "This must have been what it was like for them to pound nails into the hands of Jesus." I realized that His pain was much greater than mine, but in that moment, I "connected" my pain to the suffering of Jesus. As you do that, it will allow you to rejoice in the great love Jesus demonstrated for you on the cross. Another way to suffer with a smile is to:

3. INTERJECT PRAISE—REJOICE WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE IT

Peter writes in verse 16: if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. Would you like to guess how many times the words "Christian" or "Christians" appear in the Bible?" Three times. That's all. In Acts 11, we're told the disciples in Antioch were first called Christians. In Acts 26 after Paul gives his testimony to Herod Agrippa, Herod says, "You almost persuade me to be a Christian." Then the only other time is found here where it speaks of "suffering as Christian." Actually, the followers of Jesus didn't call themselves Christians—the title "Christ" was far too sacred for them to use for themselves. They called themselves "believers" or "disciples" or "followers of the way." The term Christian means "little Christ." It was probably a sarcastic term thrown at them by their detractors.

Peter says whenever you suffer as a Christian, you should utter an interjection of praise. When my girls were little, we had a special Saturday morning routine. I would get up and make them pancakes, and then we'd sit down and watch Saturday morning cartoons. That was long before the Cartoon Network, so Saturday morning cartoons were pretty special. I remember in the 1970s there was an educational cartoon short called Schoolhouse Rock. Even though I attended high school, college, and graduate school, pretty much everything I know about interjections I learned from Schoolhouse Rock. The song about interjections went like this: When Reginald was home with flu, uh huh, / The doctor knew just what to do / He cured the infection / With one small injection / While Reginald uttered some interjections / Hey! That smarts! / Ouch! That hurts! / Yow! That's not fair, / Interjections! / Show excitement / or emotion! / Hallelujah / Hallelujah / Hallelujah yeah!

That's exactly what we need to do, too. We need to interject some emotional statements like, "Hallelukah!" and "Praise God" whenever we're going through a tough time. You may object, "How can I praise God for all the bad things that are happening to me?" The Bible doesn't say you are to praise God because bad things are happening to you. Look again. You are to praise

God because you bear that name. Praise God that you are a Christian, and that there is healing, forgiveness, power, and grace in the name of Jesus.

So, rejoice! Some Christians complain, "Yeah, well I know I ought to rejoice, but I just don't feel like it." Well, rejoice anyway. Rejoicing isn't a feeling, it's a choice. Rejoicing shouldn't just be a reaction that measures *how* you feel. It is an act of obedience that can help determine how you *can* feel. In other words, rejoicing is not like a thermometer that simply measures your emotions. It is a divine thermostat that can determine how you feel. If you're in your air conditioned home and you're hot, you don't have to walk over to the wall and say, "Oh my, the temperature is 85 degrees, I'm so hot." No, you have the ability to set the thermostat to 70 degrees and pretty soon you'll start feeling cooler. Rejoicing is exactly the same way.

Don't wait until you feel like rejoicing to praise God. If you do, you'll never praise him if you have migraine headache. Instead, choose to rejoice and praise God—in the good times and the bad, and you'll soon find you feel differently, too. There's a powerful praise principle that says: You can't feel your way into praise, but you can praise your way into a feeling.

The Old Testament Prophet Habakkuk is a great example of how to suffer with a smile, and interject praise into a painful situation. Habakkuk lived in tough times when God's people were facing exile. There wasn't enough food to eat, the enemies were approaching. Habakkuk starts his message by asking, "God, how long do I have to call for help before you're going to do something?" (Habakkuk 1:2) Have you ever felt that way? But Habakkuk starts with sorrow and ends with a song. He finishes his message with this powerful statement: "Though the cherry trees don't blossom and the strawberries don't ripen, though the apples are worm eaten and the wheat fields stunted, though the sheep pens are sheepless and the cattle barns empty... You fill in your own struggles there: Though my spouse is in the hospital, and my teenager just wrecked the car again; though there's no money in the bank, and I just lost my job... go ahead fill in your pain... but then Habakkuk interjected praise into his pain. He concluded: I'M SINGING JOYFUL PRAISE TO GOD. I'M TURNING CARTWHEELS OF JOY TO MY SAVIOR GOD. Counting on God's Rule to prevail, I take heart and gain strength." (Habakkuk 3:17-19 *The Message*)

The only way you can interject praise into your painful situation is to have faith that God is still in control. Praise during painful times is a profession of faith. I came across a little poem, and although I don't know who wrote it, one verse says, "Faith came singing into my room / And the other guests took flight; / Fear, anxiety, grief and gloom/ Sped out into the night. / I wondered how such peace could be. / But, Faith said gently, "Don't you see / "they really cannot live with me." When you interject praise into your times of pain, grief, gloom, and anxiety cannot hang around for long.

The reason we can praise God in the tough times is because most of us can look back on the rough times in the past, and find that something good came out of it. On September 12, 1979 Hurricane Frederick was spinning in the Gulf of Mexico, gaining more strength by the hour. By the time it slammed into Mobile, Alabama that night it was a category 3 hurricane with winds of 145 miles an hour. My mother and dad were living in Mobile, and because my mother was a public health nurse, she was required to stay in Mobile and work at one of the emergency medical centers. Although both my parents grew up on the Gulf Coast, they said they never

experienced anything like that before. By the next morning, 75 percent of the buildings in Mobile were damaged. Frederick caused \$2.3 billion in damage. At the time, it was the costliest hurricane in history.

For the next 21 days, my parents didn't have electricity or running water. But because my dad was a forester he had a chain saw, so he started cutting the trees off the houses and streets in his neighborhood. Because he had a Coleman cook stove, their backyard became a dining center for the neighborhood. It was terrible disaster but later my dad told me. Son, before the hurricane, we all had fences around our yards, and we hardly knew each other. But Frederick either blew the fences away or the trees knocked them down. As bad as the hurricane was, we found a lot of great folks in our neighborhood, and we became good friends. I doubt that would have ever happened without old Frederick.

In the same way, the adversity that comes into our lives has a way of knocking down barriers, and helping us come to see what is really important in life. Romans 8:28 is more than just a Bible verse, it is a powerful, unbreakable promise. The Bible says, "And we know that in all things (good, bad, or in between) God works for the good of those who love him." So, go ahead, interject praise when your heart is aching. Life isn't fair, but God is good.

4. REJECT BITTERNESS—DON'T QUIT WHEN YOU'RE HURT

Peter writes in verse 19 that "those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." I like that word "continue." It means that even when we're suffering, we should keep on keeping on. Don't quit. Sometimes when a Christian is suffering, they experience bitterness. They think, "Why, me?" Instead of choosing to praise God, they get discouraged and start getting sour and mean. It's a natural animal reaction to want to strike out and hurt others when you're hurting. That's why it's dangerous to corner a wounded animal.

People are the same way. When we're hurting physically or emotionally, we want to crawl into a corner and give up. And if someone tries to approach us, we strike out at them. But we must reject the temptation to become bitter and to give up. There are thousands of people who suffer with a smile. How? They just smile and keep on going.

Henry Ford, the great automobile manufacturer actually knew more about people than he did about cars. He said: There are two kinds of workers: Those who call in sick and those who crawl in sick. There are people listening to me today in person who are hurting in one way or another, yet you got up and put on a smile and came to church to be with other people. You crawled in sick—you aren't a quitter. But there are many others allow pain to make them quit.

Do you know what was the greatest college football team in history? You might guess Oklahoma, or Notre Dame, or Alabama—but you'd be wrong. The greatest college football team was the 1899 team from the University of the South which is in East Tennessee. Today, college football teams play one game a week. But in 1899, the 12 players on the Tigers team left to play five major college teams in 6 days. They boarded a train and in one week they beat Texas, Texas A&M, Tulane, LSU, and Mississippi. None of those teams scored a single point. For the season

the Tigers were 12-0. They outscored their opponents 332-10. Only undefeated Auburn scored 10 points against them in a losing effort in the last game of the season. Those were the days when the helmets were made of thin leather with no face guards. They could fold their helmets up and put them in their back pockets after the game. There were only twelve players! They played five teams in six days! What does that mean? It means those guys played hurt. Sure they sustained injuries and pain, but they kept on playing anyway.

These Christians Peter wrote to were being slaughtered, and yet he said, "Rejoice! Praise God! Continue to do good!" He said, "Sure you're hurt, but stay in the game! Don't quit!" I'm looking at some hurting people today. God is saying the same thing to you. Stay in the game! Don't quit! Don't become bitter! Keep on keeping on!

I love the verse we find in II Corinthians that says: "So we're not giving up! How could we? Even though on the outside it appears as if things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace. These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us." (II Corinthians 4:16-17, *The Message*)

CONCLUSION

If you're going through a time of pain right now, you may be asking God to take you out of the fire. Remember those four words: *Expect* pain; *Connect* with Jesus' pain; *Interject* pain; and *Reject* bitterness. Your struggle is making you stronger.

Once a man who loved to watch butterflies found a cocoon. He gently took it home to watch the caterpillar emerge as a butterfly. Soon the butterfly began to struggle to break free of the cocoon. Wanting to help, the man took a tiny pair of scissors and snipped the end of the cocoon away to release the butterfly. To his dismay the butterfly wilted over lay motionless. It didn't fly, and it would never fly.

What the man, in his kindness and haste, did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our lives. If God allowed us to go through our lives without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. We could never fly! Instead, God allows us to experience struggles, pain, and suffering because He wants us to be able to float above our circumstances like a beautiful butterfly.

The Bible says: "Consider it a gift when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors...don't try to get out of anything prematurely...so that you may become mature and well developed." (James 1:2-4 *The Message*) When you're hurting, God says, "I know it's tough and tight. I know you're struggling, but it is the struggle that is going to make you stronger, so don't give up when

things get tough. Instead why don't you try this: Smile though your heart is aching, smile even though it's breaking; When there are clouds in the sky; you'll get by if you smile...or better yet, rejoice and lift up your praises to God!

OUTLINE

1. EXPECT PAIN—DON'T BE SURPRISED WHEN YOU SUFFER

"We hoped for peace but no good has come, for a time of healing but there was only terror." *Jeremiah 8:15*

2. CONNECT YOUR PAIN—YOU SHARE SOMETHING WITH JESUS

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing his suffering, becoming like him in his death." *Philippians 3:10*

3. INTERJECT PRAISE—REJOICE WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE IT

"Though the cherry trees don't blossom and the strawberries don't ripen, though the apples are worm eaten and the wheat fields stunted, though the sheep pens are sheepless and the cattle barns empty I'M SINGING JOYFUL PRAISES TO GOD. I'M TURNING CARTWHEELS OF JOY TO MY SAVIOR GOD. Counting on God's Rule to prevail, I take heart and gain strength." *Habakkuk 3:17-19 The Message*

4. REJECT BITTERNESS—DON'T QUIT WHEN YOU'RE HURT

"So we're not giving up! How could we? Even though on the outside it appears as if things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace. These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us." *II Corinthians 4:16-17, The Message*



DISCLAIMER: These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes