

## What Our Faith Can Do!

Suffering happens. Sometimes it is explainable. Most often it is indescribable. We come to an understanding that our Faith does not keep bad things from happening. The real question of faith is not "Why do people suffer?" The real question is "How do we handle suffering, challenges and tragedies?" We handle suffering by faith which is grounded in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time"* (I Peter 1:3-5).

Faith is more than wishful thinking. Our hope is built on Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection. We believe not because of us, who we are, or what we have done. We believe because God has worked in us a new life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has provided for us an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. On Christ the solid rock we stand, all other ground is sinking sand. Faith is grounded in Jesus who is able to do more than we can ever imagine or think. In New York City on 5th Avenue at the entrance of the RCA building, there is a gigantic statue of *Atlas struggling and straining, holding the world on his shoulders*. Across the street at St. Patrick's Cathedral, behind the high altar, there is a *small statue of Jesus as a little boy holding the world in his hand with no effort at all*. When I am struggling and hurting, feeling the pain, wondering about tomorrow and anxious as to what it may hold, I try to remember, Jesus has the whole world, including everybody here, in His hands. That is faith and that is why even in pain we have great courage. Our faith is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our Faith Is Refined By The Fire. *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."* (I Peter 1:6-7).

People are a lot like tea bags. You never know their real strength until you put them in hot water. Life is determined by the way we handle the hot water we find ourselves in! Often the hot water we find ourselves in is of our own doing, but not always! Even then is the opportunity to let it be a turning point in our lives. George Whitfield prayed, "O God, put me into one furnace after another, that my soul may be transparent, so I can see God as he is." Whitfield understood that we are refined by the fire. You and I understand that even in the difficult moments of our lives there is a foundation that supports and strengthens us! The refining process includes heating up and cooling down. The flames make us tender so we can bend without breaking, be shaped without shattering. And the cooling teaches us the fine art of waiting until we are strong enough to live into our new reason for being.

Our Faith Fills Us with Inexpressible Joy! "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are *Filled With An Inexpressible And Glorious Joy*" (I Peter 1:8). It is joy, unspeakable and full of glory. The Greek term *Chara* means "rejoicing with a joy that is beyond expression." It knows that no trouble enjoys everlasting life. It believes that this too shall pass. It is in all things giving thanks for the goodness of God. W.E. Sangster was one of Methodism's finest preachers of the 20th century. Late in his life, Dr. Sangster suffered from muscular atrophy, a disease that gradually left him unable to speak and eventually unable to swallow. On the Easter before his death, Dr. Sangster wrote this to his daughter, "It is terrible to wake up Easter morning and have no voice to shout – Hosanna! He is Risen! But it would still be more terrible to have a voice and not want to shout. "Chara is joy in the heart even when it cannot make it to our lips. It is truly the great peace of God that passes all understanding!

Bethany Hamilton, once ranked as the best amateur teen surfer in Hawaii, lost an arm to a tiger shark in 2003. But the accident did not dampen her compassion or competitive spirit. She worked hard and got back to surfing again and holding her own. Bethany quoted saying, "I'm looking forward to the future. I want to show the world that I still have a life even if I do not have my arm, and that my life is filled with joy. I have an undying trust that God is taking care of me." Your Faith will see you through! We handle our suffering by faith. So pray for faith until you have it. Live by faith because you need it. Rejoice in the faith that will see you through. If you do not have faith to move mountains, maybe you do have faith to tackle a mole hill. So use what you have and let God give you what you need because His Strength is perfect when our strength is gone!