

| FAITHFULNESS IN TRIALS

THANKING GOD



While Navigating Life's
STORM SEASONS



BY JAMES LASHER

The truth in the old saying, “life comes at you fast,” is undeniable, but it can also take on what feels like various forms as it is moving fast.

There are seasons we endure that feel like life is a fast-moving and massive wave in the ocean. It beats us down repeatedly and once we get our head above water, we are hit by the next wave, and the next wave, and this pattern continues for what feels like an eternity.

Other times life can come at us like an out of control freight train that smashes into our vehicle and completely upends us. Perhaps the death of a loved one or losing job security or any number of events that can turn our world upside down as we flip from the collision that we never saw coming.

In these inevitable moments in life, just ask any Christian leader or mature believer in your life about turbulent seasons and they will confirm they have not just endured one but several. It is imperative to not just turn to the Lord during our times of sorrow, hurt, confusion and stretching, but to praise Him and thank Him in the storm.

New Seasons of Growth and Testing

Like many aspects of the Christian walk, this is always easier said than put into action in our lives. When a life moment or season hits it can cause a mental or emotional reaction that takes our eyes off the greatest life preserver of all: God. Allow me to share with you a recent “wilderness” season I went through to encourage you to turn to the Lord who comforts us during our own turbulent times of life.

For the past year and two months, I have been commuting from Orlando, Florida, to South Georgia where my wife and daughter were staying with my in-laws. A week after getting hired at Charisma Media, a God-event that we both knew I was

brought to by His will, my mother-in-law and niece survived an horrific car accident. My mother-in-law incurred a traumatic brain injury and was rushed into emergency brain surgery and by the grace of God survived a fractured skull from the crash. My niece, praise the Lord, walked away with minor injuries but suffered the mental hurts that come from such an ordeal.

For the next year, my wife and I felt she would be staying in Georgia to help her mother during this time of recovery. Let me tell you, aside from the obvious reasons this would be a difficult season for us, before getting this God-ordained job in Florida I had been a stay-at-home dad with my daughter for the first year of her life. Now, I was going to be seeing her and my wife for a day-and-a-half a week.

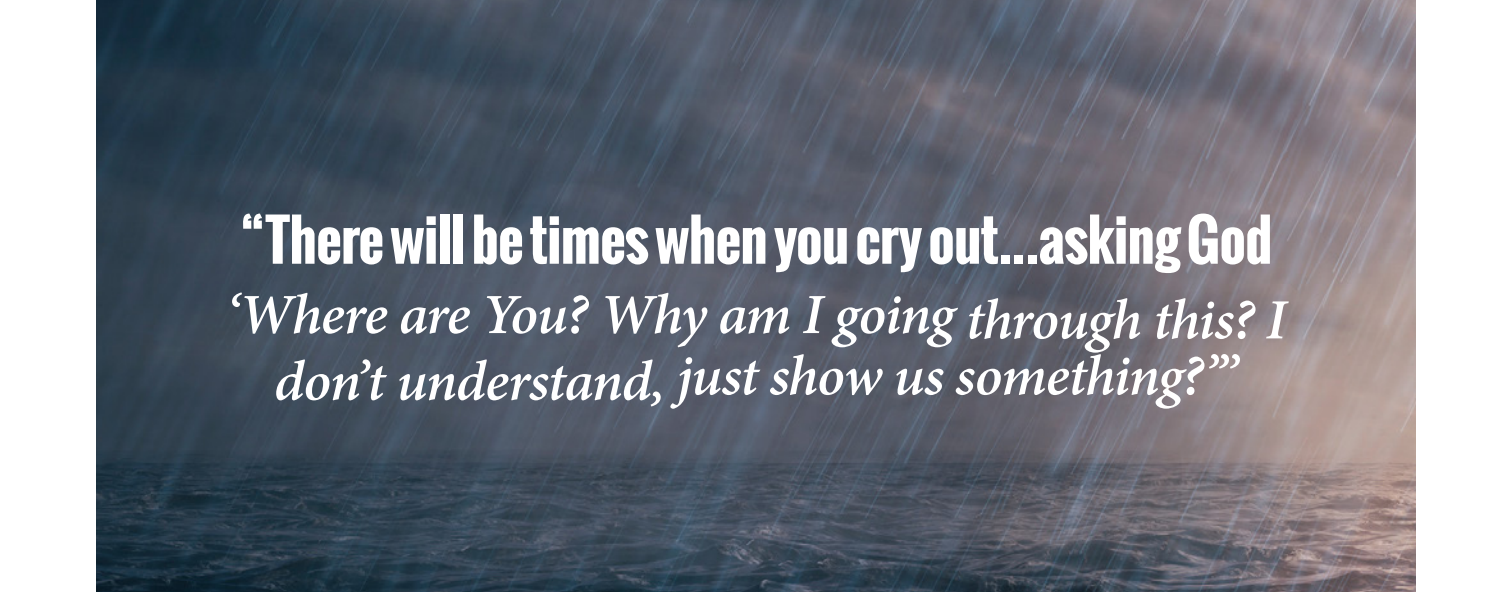
The Lord always provided me with a place to stay during the week in Florida. He also provided the finances to afford this lifestyle, for which I give Him the praise and glory, but I was not always praising Him over those difficult months.

I missed my wife, I longed to hold my daughter, I had countless moments of doubt if I was even on the right path God wanted me on. My wife and I prayed together, and we prayed apart. I wept bitterly in hotel rooms more times than I can recall, and tried on multiple occasions to convince God we had reached our point of breaking. That we just could not be stretched anymore.

The Testing of Endurance Produces Character

But God knows best, even when we are completely at a loss of what His plans are for us in a particular moment or season. He uses these seasons in the wilderness for His purposes, and it is imperative we do not give up on Him during the hardships.

There will be times when you cry out, much like I did alone in a hotel room, and ask God “Where are You? Why am I going



**“There will be times when you cry out...asking God
‘Where are You? Why am I going through this? I
don’t understand, just show us something?’”**

through this? I don’t understand, just show us something?” And it may feel like He is not listening, but rest assured He is.

The seasons always come to an end, but how they end is up to us.

Are we controlling our attitudes during these periods of difficulty, or are our attitudes controlling us? Are we going

***“It may feel like
He is not listening,
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to complain, much like the children of Israel did on their way to the Promised Land, or are we going to show a bit of discipline and trust that the Lord knows better than we do?

Keep in mind that complaining exhibits a distrust in the Lord’s planning and reveals ungratefulness for what He has done in our own hearts. It was in mine and He had to work out that ungratefulness, often in ways that hurt (not physically of course), and I had to make the choice to get in line with His plans or go off on my own and force things to happen in my life that run contrary to what the Lord had planned. Recall the Lord’s wisdom in Romans 5:3-5 (MEV), “Not only so, but we also boast in tribulation, knowing that tribulation produces patience, patience produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God is shed abroad

in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Just look at the Lord’s response to His chosen people, Israel, when they grumbled before entering the Promised Land in Numbers 14: “O that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or that we had died in this wilderness! And why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should become prey? Is it not better for us to return to Egypt?” And they said one to another, ‘Let us select a leader, and let us return to Egypt,’” (v. 2-4). They said this after all they had witnessed and received from the Lord on their way to the Promised Land! After everything they had endured as a people they were willing to head back to where they had come from and renounce the future God had planned for them.

Needless to say, God did not care for this attitude that they displayed with His response to the complaining in verses 11 and 12: “The Lord said to Moses, ‘How long will this people disgrace Me? And how long will they not believe Me, in spite of all the signs which I have done among them? I will strike them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make from you a nation greater and mightier than they.’” Had Moses not interceded on Israel’s behalf, the redemption story of Jesus Christ may have turned out quite differently, but of course, that is not the case.

Resist Temptations to Anxiety With Gratefulness

Complaining is an easy thing to do when life just is not going the way we

hoped that it would. Negative emotions and even demonic oppression are waiting for us in the shadows, itching to turn our negativity against the One who is on our side rooting for us.

My family and I also had intercessors praying to the Lord on our behalf. My mother and her intercession group at church, my work, friends and others whom I am probably unaware of were lifting us and our situation up to the Lord. He heard the prayers while protecting, providing for and comforting us throughout our most recent season in the storm.

When the time came, the Lord established us in our new land, Florida. He

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provided in ways we certainly did not anticipate, from places we did not expect. There were certainly times we would think “maybe this is Him, or this, or this, or that,” and each time He would shut the door on those routes being the path He wanted to take.

Now, we are in another new season that will certainly bring with it a fresh set of tests of faith, but it is always a relief to make it through one season to another. There is a passage in the Bible

for every situation we face, yes I said every, and during these seasons of testing Philippians 4:6-7 stands as a pillar of encouragement for those enduring difficult times: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will protect your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

“Smooth Sailing?”

While the world brings anxiety, depression, anger and confusion to the forefront of our minds, the fruit of the Spirit instills love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control into our hearts. These events that take place in our lives can feel overwhelming, that there is no end to them. But recognize the opportunity behind them to grow and strengthen yourself in the Lord.

With a firm foundation established by time intentionally spent studying the Word of God, we edify ourselves to not just weather but power up during our seasons of struggle. This increase in our faith will prepare us for what the Lord has planned next in our lives. We do not just hit a place in life and go, “All done! We finished the journey of Christianity and have it all figured out. Smooth sailing from here on out!”

Not a chance.

Instead, the Lord moves us forward, like on a path of stepping stones going from one to the next on the way to our ultimate destination: paradise with Him.

As you navigate the storms of life, keep the Word of God in your heart to offer guidance and strength during these times while glorifying and thanking the Lord. I’ll leave you with 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 as a guide on how to faithfully traverse the wilderness while pleasing the Lord on your journey: “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” ◀

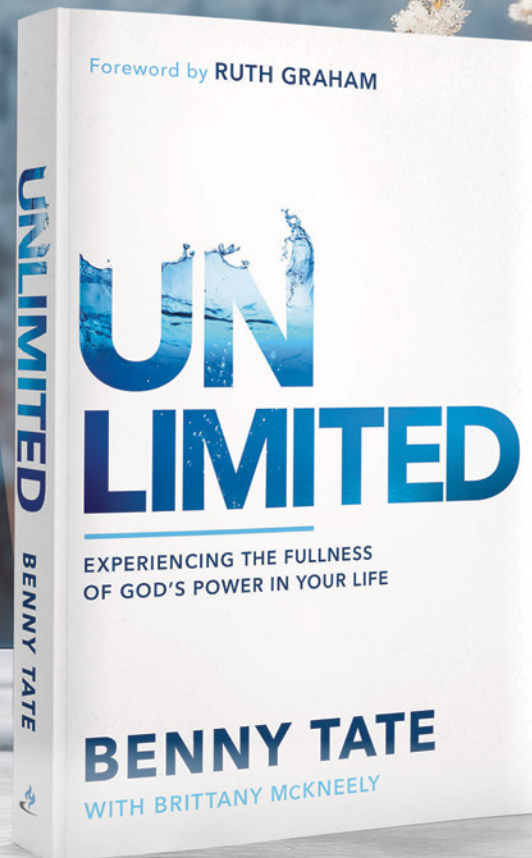
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