

LIVING WITH PAIN TO GET THE VICTORY

Did you know the Lord has a book of remembrance? Malachi 3:16 says that He wrote down the names of those who fear the Lord, and your name is in there. If you are watching these kinds of shows, you love the Lord and you love to talk about Him, and I do, too. Sometimes life is really, really hard. You can look at other people and think, "I bet they never have anything hard. Their life is probably so good and everything works out for them. However, on the way to victory, there is a lot of pain involved. If you have ever played football, or any other sport, one of the main things your coach is going to say is "No pain, no gain." Many times people have said to me, "Betty, I would love to be doing what you are doing. That just looks like so much fun to be going around the world and seeing all those countries, seeing new things and having exciting adventures." Sometimes I think, "Would you like to go through what I go through to get there?" You have an enemy in the devil. He tries to stop you if you are going to affect a lot of people. I can tell you specific things that have happened in my life that I knew the devil was trying to stop me.

If you could sit down with someone who does something big that affects a lot of lives and say to them, "What does it really cost to get where you are," you might find yourself saying "I don't know if I want to do that after all. I didn't know it had that in it. I don't think I want that." You know as well as I do that you cannot go through this life without experiencing pain of some kind. It is just part of living in this world. Sometimes people say things like, "Why did God let my brother die? I prayed. Why did God let my mother die? I prayed to God, and it didn't help." This is real life. This is not heaven yet. In heaven there is no pain, no death, and no tears. God wipes away all of the tears. It is over then. That is not what Jesus says about this world. He says, "In this world, you will have tribulation. Cheer up. I have overcome the world." We can overcome through Jesus. I want to talk to you today about what is really involved in getting the victory you are after.

Turn in your Bible to Isaiah 57. Are you aware that Jesus read the Old Testament? The Old Testament had been around a long time before Jesus, the man, came to earth. So, He read the same things we read. That was exciting to me to one day figure out that Jesus read the Psalms. I love the Psalms and Jesus read the same ones I read. Jesus read Isaiah, too. In Isaiah 57 it says, "Because the sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be dismayed. Therefore, I have set my face like a flint determined to do His will and I know I will triumph." Isn't that an amazing thing? It says, "He who gives me justice is near. Who will dare to oppose me now? Where are my enemies? Let them appear. The sovereign Lord is on my side." The key in that verse is "I am going to set my face like a flint." What does that mean? I know you are from all countries watching this, especially from the Philippines. Maybe you do not know what a flint is. A flint is a very hard rock. In fact, you can even use it to start fires. It is very hard to break it. Other rocks will be broken on it before it is broken. It says in Isaiah, "I am going to set my face like a flint." That means, "I have my eye on where I am going and I am going to get there. Nothing is going to stop me. No obstacle will keep me down. I am going there." That is setting your face like a flint.

Jesus set His face like flint. It is in Luke 9:51, "And it came to pass when the time was come that He should be received up (that means crucified), He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." Think about that in your life. You know where you want to go and there is pain involved in getting there. Yet you have to say to yourself, "I am going to endure that pain for what is beyond it. It is worth it." You women know exactly what I am talking about. Think about when you are in labor and delivery. You have been carrying that baby for nine months and you are so tired of being pregnant. You are sick of it. You want to be able to sleep on your stomach. You think, "I am going to have that baby. I cannot wait to see my baby." Then you start having those labor pains. I remember being in the labor room and thinking, "I don't want to have a baby. I changed my mind. This hurts." But, you are having the baby whether you want it or not. It is too late. Once you have the baby, and get that baby in your arms, you look at it and think, "You are so wonderful. You were worth it all. But I don't want to have another one." The next thing you know, you might see a baby six months later and think, "I want to have another baby." What about the pain? Remember, you said you did not want to do this. You say, "I don't care. I am going to do it anyway. I want the baby."

That is the title of the lesson today, Living With Pain in Order to Get the Victory. There will be nothing in life that is worth getting that you do not have to go through pain to get there; whether it is the pain of change, the pain of the environment, or the circumstances. I have a friend who has a saying that is, "When the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of change, you will change." Did you hear what I said? When the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain that is involved in changing, you

will change because you cannot stand the old pain anymore. We are all like that. All of us have areas of our lives, areas of our character, areas of our ways of dealing with people, which we have to change. You are not going to go further than where you are right now unless you are will to go through the pain of change. It is worth it, though. As I said, when it is over, you just remember the victory. You do not remember the pain. You will think, "Yes it was hard, but it was worth it. I am glad I am here."

Look now at Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross," endured the pain, endured the embarrassment, endured the shame, endured the mocking, endured the scourging, endured nails in His hands and feet, endured everyone leaving Him. Let me read it to you again. "who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross despising the shame, and He is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." I know you are going through pain right now. If you are not, you just did; or if you have not yet, you will, because it is life. Jesus said that tribulation is going to be there. The problem comes when you caused it. That is when those fires burn the hottest. I have done that, too.

Sometimes you have to go through stuff to change and it is not stuff you want. In fact, you would not wish it on your worst enemy. There is not anyone you would wish it on. Can you honestly say, "I do like what I became out of it." I could ask you, "Do you like what you became?" "Yes, I do." "Do you want to go through it again?" "No I don't." "Was that what it took for you to change?" "Yes, it was, but it was worth it."

Some of us are stubborn. Some of us are thick-headed. Some of us do not get it. God tries to tell you and tries to warn you. He tries to put it before you and you just do not change. Finally, the pain has to get so great that you decide, "I will change."

I went through a family crisis that the pain was unbearable. I could not even describe the pain. I went to a counselor because I really believe in counseling. I said, "I am experiencing pain that is so deep. If I use the words unbelievable, excruciating, and devastating, they are way up here. Where I am in the pain is way down here. There are no words for it." Maybe you have never experienced pain like that. Maybe you do not know what I am talking about. I am sure there are some of you that do. It is pain beyond belief. I did not know what to do with it. I could not sleep for a week, could not eat for a week. It was devastating. Sometimes the hardest pain is when you did not have anything to do with it but you are still there anyway. I this Christian counselor and told him that and he said, "Let me tell you about my life." He began to tell me about his life. He used to be on drugs, he was an alcoholic, his whole family was alcoholics. The kids are alcoholics and on drugs, too. He had been married several times. He said, "Life has been really hard on me and I have always felt like a failure." I was sitting there thinking, "What in the world am I doing here paying you this kind of money? You are a mess. Lord, what am I doing here?" The counselor looked at me and said, "That was quite some time ago. My life was so bad that I went to a counselor. She looked at me and said 'It is only pain. You can't go under pain, you can't go over pain, you can't go around pain. You have to go through pain. But, you can do it.'" He said, "It changed my life to hear that lady say that." It changed my life for him to say it to me, and I am saying it to you today. It is only pain and you can get through pain and go on with your life.

How do you deal with pain and what can you learn from it? The first thing is to realize everyone in the world has some kind of pain going on at any time. Recently someone said to me, "Be kind to everyone because everyone is having pain in their life about something." I try to live by that. Pain can come in stages. It is like, "Okay, this is bad but I think I can handle this, Lord." Then it gets worse. You say, "Okay, I have grown and I know you better Lord. I am staying in the word. I can handle this." Then it gets worse. You think, "Why does it keep getting worse?"

Let me tell you a story. Once there was a man who saw a caterpillar on the edge of a branch. He watched that caterpillar. It was trying so hard to come out of the cocoon, struggling and trying, but it could not. It continued to try and it could not get out. The man felt so sorry for the caterpillar that he got a really sharp razor blade and cut that cocoon open so the caterpillar could come out. To his amazement, the caterpillar died. He could not figure out why. He found out later that it was only in the struggle that the caterpillar developed the lungs and capacity to fly that would enable him to become a butterfly, and the man thought he was helping. Instead he was destroying the caterpillar. God knows what you have to go through to make you who he wants you to be. Read the Bible. I wish I could tell you, "Get saved, get Jesus in your heart, and you are never going to have any more pain. It is going to be easy until Jesus comes." That is not what this says. Jesus is our author. He is the author of our faith. He is the finisher of our faith. It says, "Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross despising the shame." There was great shame. Many people wear crosses around their necks, and they think it is a great thing. The cross was the equivalent of the electric chair that we have today. It was a great disgrace to be crucified. It was a disgrace on your family and yourself. Jesus despised that shame but He endured it because of where he was going. That is what it took to pay for your sins, so He did it. Not everyone will go through what you have to go through to get to the other side. There will be some people on this side of river saying, "I am not going to do it." Some will say, "I am doing it and I am going on. I wish you would go, but I am going."

If you do not endure what you have to endure that is painful, you will stay immature and shallow, just like that caterpillar did. The caterpillar could not become what God intended a caterpillar to become without going through the painful process. There is nothing you want out of life that does not have pain associated with it to get there. You might want a good figure, a muscular body, a scholastic high degree and many levels of college, a career in sports. You might want to be in the ministry and have a big ministry. It does not matter what you want. Perhaps you just want to be a good mother. Have you had times where you sat at the kitchen table and cried and thought, "I don't know if I can do this or not." Yes, you can do it. It is a great calling to be a good mother or father. Dads, when you die, God is not going to say, "How many hours did you put in at work?" That is not what He is going to say first. That is not the top priority. The top priority is, "How much time did you spend with Me?" Then He is going to say, "How much time did you spend with your wife and your children?" You do not want to have to stand there and hang your head in shame and say, "Could I show you all the awards I have on the wall that I got for business achievement?" Jesus will say "No, they burned up. I am sorry. They are not even around anymore." You do not want to be like that. Do not chase that. God can promote you. God can elevate you to the highest levels. You can be president of the United States because it is God's will for your life. Do not chase that thing.

Did you know when you raise your children you could have very painful times. When our kids were teenagers, we had times that I would look at my husband and say, "Anyone in your family act like this?" He would say, "No. Does anyone in your family act like this?" Then we would say, "Where did all of this come from?" Another time, we looked at each other and he said, "If we can just get them out of the house, we will be okay." We have really good kids, but there are painful times in raising even really good kids. There are very painful and hard times. You have prayed, "God, I want to be a stronger Christian. God I want to grow more in my faith. I want more faith. God, I want more patience. I am not patient enough. God I want to love everyone." Don't those sound like pretty words? We could have a good Christian hymn playing in the background. The problem is after the music quits God says, "This is how you do it." We think, "Ugh. I don't know if I want to do that."

What keeps you from going on in spite of the pain? What keeps you stuck where you are? The first one is denial. You will not even admit what is really going on. The second is excuses – the "Yeah, but. . . ." Another is giving up. "I just can't do it. I haven't got what it takes to do it." Yes you do. You have the power of God living in you. The Bible says, "God always causes me to triumph." He just did not say how hard it would be to triumph before you got there. Have you ever heard the football term "playing hurt"? What is that all about? Do you ever watch pro football players and you hear, "He broke his leg and he wrapped it up. He fractured this. He fractured that. He just wrapped it up and kept on going." I wonder how could they do that? The average person would be in a cast for six weeks. How in the world do they do that? It is because they have been through so much to get to that level of playing ability that they are just stronger mentally and physically than the rest of us. I will tell you that the worse it hurts the closer you are getting to victory. Does that encourage you? There really is an end to the pain. It is not like God is saying, "I want you to be in pain the rest of your life." It is not like that at all. You can praise God and it is a way to please God. You can praise God in the middle of the pain and say "Lord, I know you are in control. I know you are going to help me. I know you are going to change me. I know I am going to learn what I need to learn out of this. I don't like it, Lord, but I want to be what I told you I wanted to be. I really mean it. So, it is okay. Just help me to get through it and to get to the other side."

You can give a lot of reasons for why you did not do something, but there will always be other people who had the same reasons and did not let it stop them. You can say, "This isn't fun anymore. It used to be fun and now it is just hard." Then you have to bear down and make it happen anyway. You know what I am talking about in childbirth. Capacity is a state of mind. What in the world do I mean? I mean that the human body is capable of doing about ten times more than the mind thinks. I saw a movie recently. There was a young man on the football team and he did not think he was able to do what was needed. The coach put a blindfold on him and said, "You do it until I tell you to stop." The guy pushed and pushed, and tried and tried. It was so hard. The coach would say, "Don't give up. You can do it. Do a little more." The young man tried and tried and said, "I can't do it coach." "Yes you can. Come on." He tried and tried and tried. When they took the blindfold off, he had gone the full length of the football field. It was ten times more than he ever thought he could do. It changed his life.

Watch what your mind is saying. You listen to the Lord. Let your spirit man seek God and say, "God what are you saying I can do?" It will always be more than you think it is. People do not teach you that pain is what makes you a winner. Think back to the times you have achieved great things with your life and the pain you went through. Weren't you proud of yourself when you got through? After the race is over, you do not even remember the pain, or it is really diminished. You just remember the sweet feeling of victory. You can do that. The Lord can help you.

If you do not know how to be filled with the spirit, just say "God, fill me with Your Spirit. I need your power.

I am trying to live the Christian life in my own strength and I think I have more trouble than I really need to have.” God says, “Okay, I will fill you with the Spirit as long as you understand life does not get instantly easy. I just give you the power to live it, to go through it, and to be victorious.” Remember “God always causes me to triumph.” I love you.

QUIET TIME QUESTIONS

1. How does it help you to “set your face like flint” when you are going through pain?
2. How does it help you to apply Hebrews 12:2 to the painful situation you may be dealing with?
“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,” endured the pain, endured the embarrassment, endured the shame, endured the mocking, endured the scourging, endured nails in His hands and feet, endured everyone leaving Him.
3. How does God and His Word help us get through pain?
4. How does the Holy Spirit help us get through pain?
5. What are the advantages of working through the pain?

To watch the video on LIVING WITH PAIN TO GET THE VICTORY, Pillar Six, Leadership Skills, go to www.bettyswann.com.

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