

When Life Breaks its Promises
2 Cor. 1:8-10 & 12:6-10

Life often breaks its promises, leaving us frustrated and discontented. Even faithful followers of Christ face debilitating circumstances. On his letters, Paul tells of occasions where his circumstances fell far short of his hopes and desires. In 2 Cor. 1:8-9a, he describes his circumstances in Asia, “troubles,” was one used to describe the process of crushing grapes or olives.

Paul didn’t surrender to his circumstances or struggle in his own power to change them. Instead, he trusted God to use whatever circumstance he faced to transform him into someone who trusted in God. Paul described this transformation in 2 Cor. 12. He was stricken with something he called a “thorn in the flesh.” This word for “thorn” was used to refer to fortification spikes placed around a military encampment or stakes used for impalement as a means of execution.

People often begin to follow Jesus with high hopes of undiluted blessing. But at some point life happens. Everything that was once coming up roses is now coming up weeds and thorns.

I am convinced that it is at this point that a follower of Christ either moves toward real Christian maturity or mediocrity. They decide, ‘I’m not going to let this hardship pull me away from God but push me closer to Him.”

The mature Christian can say this because of God’s sufficient grace. Grace is God’s favor toward something. Here, grace is God’s tendency to favor the weak and powerless; to provide His power to a believer in inverse measure to the worldly power they possess. When your circumstances fall short and life breaks its promises, the mature believer trusts that God’s power will, in time, come through. So, failed circumstances don’t turn you away from God but closer to His side than ever before.

If we take 2 Cor. 12 seriously, we can say when circumstances fall short, “I shall emerge humble,... I shall emerge strong,...I shall emerge victorious one day.”