

Thick Skin

One thing that the Lord has been speaking to me is developing some seriously thick skin. Life is a terminal experience. Adversity tells us how good you are and the work that needs to be done in you. It introduces you to yourself and reveals your strength and weakness. Life can be tough and rough. Yes, there are many good things but we need to remember that we live in a fallen world and bad things will happen to good people just as good things and bad things happen to bad people.

- i) For that reason, we need to develop some thick skin. Many times, we take offense over minor things. The truth is, we can and have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to do better. Refuse to be offended—it is a choice!
- ii) Another thing true about life and ministry as well is, it is the survival of the fittest. Nothing is easy. It's hard. You can't make it on your own. You need support and relationship from others to help you survive the storms of life.
- iii) We need to get to a point where certain things do not bother us anymore.
- iv) People will hurt you and will do crazy things. Beware. If you do not develop a thick skin, you will quit every time. You will be a quitter or like Trump calls it a “choke artist.”

What is a thick skin?

A thick skin could be a defense against many things that could harm or hurt us. A crocodile is known for having a thick skin, President Donald Trump is one of the people I know that do have thick skin. What he has gone through and has been done to him and his family very few people could take. **While we desire to have a thick skin towards things that come at and against us, we should also desire to keep our hearts soft and sensitive toward the Lord.**

Thick skin for human beings doesn't come naturally. It must be intentionally developed and exercised.

In life, sometimes we win and sometimes we learn—not lose. We need to learn from the bad experiences and let them go. You can either focus on the loss, lesson, and/or the cross. Everybody faces problems, obstacles, and barriers. Some people let those things defeat them, some do not.

When we are facing hard times, when it is winter, roots go deeper and when the summer comes or the easier times come, you bring forth fruit.

2 Timothy 2:3-4 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

- a) The Training of the soldier is one of the most brutal and hard things to go through willfully. A soldier in boot camp is trained and disciplined to endure hardship. If a soldier cannot survive the boot camp, he could never survive the war zone.
 - i) The training and the brutality they go through is meant to toughen them up to develop thick skin and face the enemy head-on which is the reason why these soldiers in training will embrace that harassment.
- b) A soldier withdraws from the regular life of the civilians and lives a separated and disciplined life. He is concerned and occupied with different things compared to regular civilians. He is focused on delivering and pleasing his master or commander. Some things are bigger and greater causes to live and die for.
 - i) In the United States, Soldiers are called GI's—Government Issue. They live and serve at the desire of the government.
- c) This passage tells us to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. There will be hardness and we should be prepared to endure it. This passage likens a disciple to a soldier—a good soldier that must learn and endure hardship not run away from it.
- d) Hardship will come and the solution is not to run from each that we encounter rather face it. As a disciple, you will suffer hardship and persecution which you must endure. We need

to toughen up as disciples and not be a wimp, cry baby, or a softie. Many things we cry about none issues such as cell phone, job, marriage, kids, etc.

Example of areas we need to have thick skin.

a) Marriage

- i) Marriage is not an easy thing. Two people that are different, first in sex (Male and female) coming together and beginning to live with each other will not always go easy. It will require self-sacrifice and ultimately a thick skin to survive in marriage.
- ii) Marriage can be rough!
- iii) If you can survive a marriage, you can survive anything—Just kidding!

b) Work

- i) Most people do not want to be told what to do let alone to be corrected when they do wrong. Most people's number one reaction when this happens is to **quit**. There is a lack of thick skin. You can never win if you quit all the time. Quitters have never won.
- ii) Others, when they get talked to, quit instantly. Welcome to life. You will quit all your life if that is the way you are trying to handle this. You need to let the fruit of the Spirit—self-control, flow out of you.
- iii) Many people quit work only because of some minor thing and had they had some thick skin; they would have waited a little longer.

Jeremiah 12:5 If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

c) Persecution

- i) Do not be caught by surprise when it comes to persecution. It is written that it will come. Why are we surprised by these things when the Word tells us of these things happening?

- ii) Matthew 5:11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
- iii) 2 Timothy 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

A. Eternal perspective

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; [18] While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

- a) One of the ways Paul endured the storms of this life was to put things into the right perspective of eternity. This helped him to press on and not give up or even give in. He considered his afflictions, which were not light in the physical world's judgment as light. This could only happen as a result of him looking at things differently.
- b) Here in these verses, we find two primary keys to developing a thick skin.
 - i) Eternal Perspective
 - ii) Looking. Looking at the things unseen—the eternal things.
- c) Paul's light afflictions

2 Corinthians 11:21-28 *I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside*

those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

d) Endure afflictions

2 Timothy 4:5 *But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*

- a) Truth is afflictions exist and will come, but we can and should endure them.
- b) Criticism, evil, hardships, and troubles will come in ministry and life. We need to be prepared to endure them—rather than run or quit.
 - i) This is a part of Christianity and ministry.

B. But not destroyed

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 *“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;”*

- a) If you have not yet realized this, life is not a dress rehearsal. It’s hard. You should not go through it without a relationship with Jesus Christ. You need to surrender now before life makes you surrender. We live in a fallen world and God is not the one that gives us all these things.

C. Criticism

1 Samuel 17:27-30 *And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him. And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause? And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner.*

- a) I do not know a single person who was killed by criticism. Criticism will come whether you are doing things right or wrong. Most criticisms are just people expressing their own opinion and perspective. It is not personal, so to speak.
- b) Do not get your eyes off the race and go to the stands and argue with the critics. You might win the argument but then lose the race. Pick your battles.
- c) You are not every man's cup of tea. Normally, some will dislike you while others will like you.
- d) When criticism comes, remember to **turn yourself unto another**.

D. Focus on the majority.

Many times, we all tend to be negative, focused only on the negative and we in most cases leave a tone of positives on the table and we worry and stress over one negative or the minority. We can't leave life focused on the minority. We need to major in the majority and minor in the minorities.

Keys to consider in building a thick skin

A. Relationship with God.

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

- a) The number one antidote to dealing with any issue we encounter or will encounter in life is developing a vibrant relationship with the Lord. This is the number one defense we have.

B. Know your identity.

- a) You need to keep this in the forefront of your life. Life and people will attack you and say things about you that are not accurate. How are you going to respond?

- b) They will attack your accent, looks, color, height, weight, education, experience, descent, possessions, talent, gifts, background, and so forth, but if you have your identity wrapped in all these things, I guarantee that you will fall apart. You need to know and also be secure in who you are in Christ.

You are not what you do, your sex, beauty, skin color, background, and so forth.

Your identity is not:

- What you do
 - Your job or position
 - Your profession
 - We need to separate who we are from what we do.
 - Family heritage
 - Sex
 - Skin color
 - Country of origin
 - Achievements and your
- a) A person's physical attraction, looks, or beauty is not who they are. It is not your identity, and you should not wrap your identity in your looks.
- b) Physical beauty is awesome, but it fades. It is temporary. If you do not make the necessary adjustment, you will fall apart once something negative happens to your physical looks or beauty.
- c) It's important to understand the real you. Some believe and others even teach that we are a soul with a body, but the Word of God clearly shows that **we are a spirit being with a soul, living in a physical body.**

Who we are in Christ:

- Children of God, Romans 8:16; Sons of God—John 1:12
- Forgiven (Ephesians 1:8)

- Loved by God (John 17:23); Loved with His great love (Ephesians 2:4).
- Sealed such that no impurities can penetrate. Ephesians 1:13; 2 Corinthians 1:22
- Righteousness and true holiness. Ephesians 4:24
- New creature 2 Cor 5:17
- One spirit with the Lord 1 Cor 6:17 (Romans 8:9, 8:11).
- As he is, so are we in this world. 1 John 4:17
- Wisdom, righteous, sanctified, and redeemed 1 Cor 1:30
- Eternally redeemed, not momentarily or temporarily, but eternally. Hebrews 9:12
- Full of the fullness of God. John 1:16
- Anointed 2 Cor 1:21; 1 John 2:27
Our New Spirit man is anointed, and that anointing abides in us.
- Complete in Him Col 2:10; 2 Peter 1:3
- Always willing Matthew 26:41
- Perfected forever Hebrews 10:14
- Spirits of just men made perfect. Hebrews 12:23
- Partaker of the divine nature 2 Peter 1:4
- Knows all things and has the Mind of Christ 1 Corinthians 2:16
- We have the same power that rose Jesus from the dead living on the inside of us (in our new spirit man). Romans 8:11; Ephesians 1:19-20

Summary of what we are and have in Christ in Chapters 1-3:

- Blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.
- Chosen before the foundations of the earth.
- Predestined unto the adoption of children.
- We have redemption
- Forgiveness of Sins
- Have been given the riches of His grace.
- He has abounded unto us all wisdom and prudence.
- Made known unto us the mystery of His will.
- Have obtained an inheritance.
- Sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise.
- Quickened together with Christ

- Raised us up with Him
- Sitted with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.
- Loved us with His great love.
- Saved us by Grace through faith
- Made nigh by the blood of Jesus.
- Made us both one (Gentiles and Jews) by breaking down the middle wall of partition.
- He is our peace and has reconciled us unto God.
- Made a new man
- We have access by one Spirit unto the Father.
- No more strangers, foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

C. Relationship with the Word.

- a) John 8:31-32 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
- i) As we grow in our knowledge of God's Word, we will know the truth and that truth will set us free. Until we have been set free, we will not be able to build a thick skin to the storms of this life. No word = No freedom and No thick skin.

D. Die daily

- a) 1 Corinthians 15:31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.
- i) We are told to die daily, not weekly or on Sunday, not monthly, nor yearly. Every day we wake up we have to make a decision to die.
- ii) You can kick a corpse, spit on it, curse it and a corpse will not react nor respond. Why? Because it is dead. If we are being oversensitive, we have not died yet.

b) Romans 8:5-6 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

- i) Many things will die if we keep our eyes stayed on the Lord.
- ii) The number one way I believe we can put to bed and death all the nonsense we encounter is by keeping our mind and focus stayed on the Lord.
- iii) We have to have our minds set on the Lord or else we will be responding to every mood swing that comes our way.

E. The revelation of God's love

Here is another basic that many overlook on their way to the top. A revelation of how much God loves us will help us triumph in times of hardship. Satan will do all he can to convince us that God does not love us. We need to be grounded in the love of God that we do not believe the lies of the enemy.

Knowing how much God loves us will cause us to float while others are sinking in the storms of life.

He first loved us

a) 1 John 4:19 "We love him, because he first loved us." 1 John 4:10,18-19 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [18] There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. [19] We love him, because he first loved us.

- i) We love God because He first loved us. We did not initiate the love relationship we have with Jesus. He did. God took the very first step towards us even before we had anything good in us.
- ii) It is impossible to love God first. Without Him, we have no clue how love looks like. True love is demonstrated by God to us. He had to love us first for us to love Him back.

If there is another motivation other than love, you will break. You will quit. It is just a matter of time.

F. I will never leave you

- a) Hebrews 13:5 *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*
- i) There are many promises we can stand on while believing God for anything. One greatest temptation we will always encounter, especially when things are not going well, is the lie from Satan that God is not with us. If we believe that lie, we will sink. As we continue to believe and remind ourselves that God is with us, we are developing a thick skin for hard times.

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