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THE MIRROR

Friend or foe to happiness?

DOWN WITH DISCOURAGEMENT!

How to fight it—and win!

TRIBULATION TRIUMPHS

God promises power for the hour

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In a story from Native American folklore, a grandfather explains to his young grandson the inner struggle between good and evil.

“A battle goes on inside us all,” the grandfather begins. “It is a battle between two wolves. One wolf is the embodiment of everything evil, like hate, anger, jealousy, resentment, greed, arrogance, lying, and selfishness. The other wolf is the embodiment of everything good, like love, joy, peace, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, empathy, generosity, compassion, truth, and faith.”

The grandson thinks about those words and then asks, “Which wolf wins?”

The grandfather replies, “The one you feed.”

Apply that lesson to the main themes of this issue—discouragement and depression and their antitheses, positiveness and praise—and you’ve got the key to a happier, more upbeat, and more successful you.

Discouragement is like a wolf pup. Feed it, and it will grow into depression—a fierce, ravenous full-grown wolf that will turn on you every chance it gets. But feed its counterpart and you will have a strong and sure defender against such attacks.

How can you tell these two wolves apart so you’ll know which to feed? Whenever you have a thought that causes you to feel discontent, bitter, unhappy, or critical, you can be sure it’s the *wrong* wolf, stalking his prey. Don’t be his next meal! Feed the *other* one instead by filling your mind and heart with positive, encouraging, strengthening, and faith-building thoughts.

You may not be able to stop the evil wolf from coming around, but if you’re smart you won’t wait till he does to start feeding the good wolf. And remember, the more you feed the good wolf, the stronger he will grow. Feed him every chance you get, and the evil wolf will be no match for him. When it comes to a showdown, the evil wolf will turn tail and run every time.

KEITH PHILLIPS

FOR THE ACTIVATED FAMILY

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BY JULIA KELLY

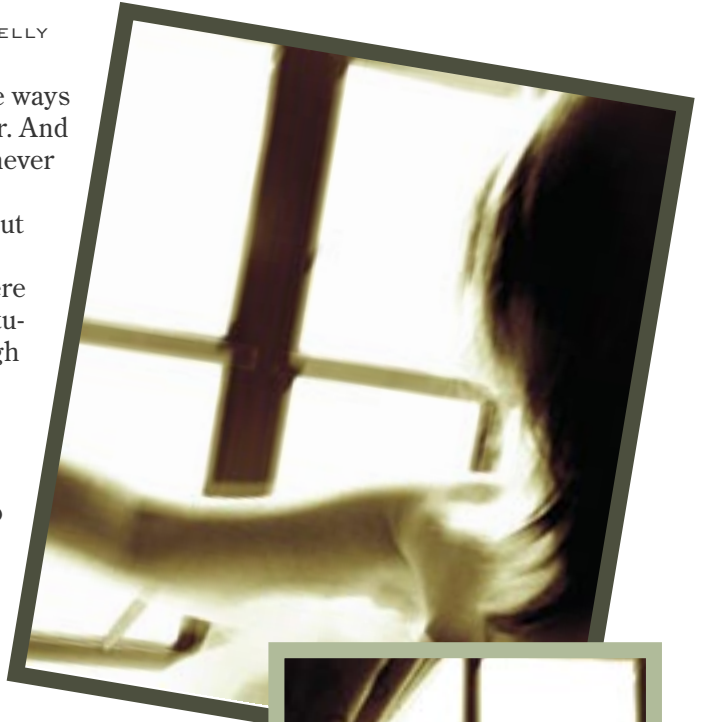
failed, all the ways I was inferior. And this mirror never let me alone.

Throughout this perfect day there were many opportunities to laugh with friends, to smile at children, to help someone else—so many ways to find happiness. But all I could see all day was my own reflection in the mirror. I was blinded to everything else, lost in my little world that consisted only of me and my mirror.

The sun was shining brightly outside, but there were dark rain clouds over my mind. Everything that happened to me seemed to confirm that no one cared or even noticed me. I looked in my mirror, and it told me that there was nothing about me *to* like. I was too riddled with faults to be loved or happy. I watched the laughter, the smiles, and the happy experiences of

others, but only from a distance as I sat in my little corner and peered around my mirror. *How can they be so happy? Don't they notice me? Don't they see how miserable I am?*

Every time I tried to venture out of my little corner, my



I WOKE UP ONE MORNING TO A PERFECT DAY, the kind that begged me to run outside and smell the fresh dew on the grass and soak up the splendor of the early morning rays. But this day I barely glanced out the window. I ignored the image of perfection and headed straight to the mirror. I didn't like what I saw.

For months I had been holding up a mirror in front of me. I don't know where I found this mirror, but one day I had glanced into it and from that point on couldn't put it down. I hadn't been able to see much of anything else for a long time. This mirror was always in the way, forever staring back at me and reminding me of all my imperfections. This mirror never showed me anything except all the ways I didn't match up to expectations, all the ways I had

THE SUN WAS SHINING BRIGHTLY **outside**, BUT THERE WERE DARK RAIN CLOUDS OVER MY MIND.

AND THEN IT OCCURRED TO ME. **WHY NOT** **JUST COVER UP THE MIRROR?**

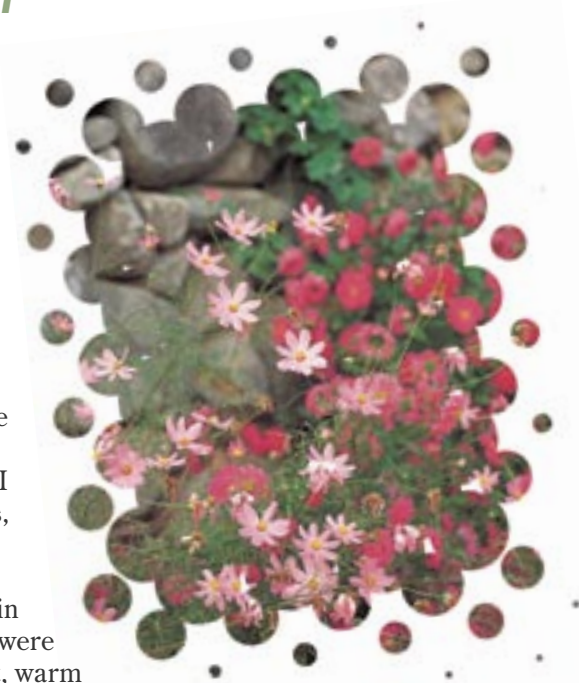
mirror screamed at me that it was no use. Then it would throw my reflection back at me, and I would stare and stare some more, letting the world pass me by while I sank further and further into the dark abyss of negativity and hopelessness.

And then it occurred to me. *Why not just cover up the mirror? Yes, you have faults. Yes, you'll never be perfect. Yes, you'll always make mistakes. So what? You can't live your life ignoring all hope of happiness just because you don't have every good quality you wish you had. Forget about yourself and focus on others. Ignore the mirror, and see how much happier you'll be!*

It took a great deal of effort, but I finally did cover up the mirror. At first I felt insecure without my mirror to run to. I felt exposed, vulnerable. At

first I was uncomfortable with the thought that people could possibly accept me just the way I was, faults, failings, and all. I soon realized, though, that the more I let myself just be myself and the more I reached out to others, difficult as that was at first, the happier I became. The dark rain clouds over my head were vanquished by bright, warm rays of blessed, lasting peace.

The mirror is still there. It's never going to go away. But I keep it out of sight. There will always be the danger that I could pick it up and become captivated by it again. I could land right back to where I



was—depressed, withdrawn, introverted, and self-absorbed. But every time I'm tempted to peek into that mirror, I remind myself how much happier I am now that I've accepted my imperfections and determined to not let them get me down. I'll never be exactly the way I wish I were, but I do have lots to give to others. And I can't do that when I'm staring into the mirror.

When I woke up this morning, cold rain was coming down in torrents. Thunder was rumbling, and I couldn't see the sun for the black clouds. It was a miserable morning outside, but sunshine and blue skies were in my heart. Today was perfect! ■

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PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Jesus, I can be thankful even for the struggles in my life and the things that are difficult, because they force me to turn to You for help and You always give me the answers. You make things so clear and easy to understand. All I have to do is turn my heart to You and receive.

Without difficulties, disappointments, and failures I wouldn't have come to know Your compassion, Your understanding, and Your forgiveness, and I wouldn't be able to pass them on to others.

Thank You for all the things You bring my way to keep me humble and make me more dependent on You. Thank You for keeping me close to You. Amen.

{ WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN }

Have you ever wondered why bad things happen to you and others for no apparent reason? In asking that question you are in good company. Many times King David of Bible fame asked God the same question, as recorded in the book of Psalms. “My God, why are You so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?” (Psalm 22:1 NIV).

In this Psalm, David was so discouraged he said he was no better than a worm

(verse 6). Maybe he even felt so low, as the saying goes, that he would have to reach up to scratch a worm’s ankle.

Despite David’s lament, you will read later in the same Psalm that David ends his heartcry on a positive note: “He has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; He has not hidden His face from him but has listened to his cry for help. The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the Lord will praise

Him—may your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord” (Psalm 22:24, 26–27 NIV).

David overcame his discouragement by praising God in spite of how he felt. It worked for David, and it will work for us! ■

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{ LET THE LIGHT IN! }

The Devil is the accuser (Revelation 12:9–10). He accuses us for what we haven’t done or could have done but didn’t. He picks at all the lacks and shortcomings and weaknesses and little failures. If you start listening to him in your mind, you’re beaten, because there will always be something more you could have done or something you wish you hadn’t done. There will always be something—some neglect,

some oversight, some mistake or fault, some bad habit—that the Devil can pick on if he wants to, and he sure wants to!

But thank God for Jesus! He’s the antidote! Jesus always points out the good things. He never loses faith in us and He never stops loving us, even when we do make mistakes. So when the Devil descends on you with his dark thoughts about yourself or others, don’t listen to him. Listen to Jesus instead. Let

the light in! Think positive thoughts. Remind yourself constantly of the good. When you think positively about yourself and others, it chases away the doubts and the fears and nagging little accusations from the Devil. Fill your mind and heart and mouth with positive things. Chase away the Devil and all his shades of night by letting the light in. Count your blessings and put the Devil on the run! ■

DOWN WITH DISCOURAGEMENT!

By Maria Fontaine

DISCOURAGEMENT CAN BE REAL TORTURE, and it can lead to worse problems, such as depression and a general sense of hopelessness. In order to effectively combat discouragement, depression, and the like, we need to understand that while these negative mental and emotional states are usually triggered by disheartening physical circumstances or events, the continued negative feelings are *spiritual* in nature.

We live in a physical world, but we are also surrounded by an unseen spiritual world where a continual battle is being waged for control of our hearts and minds. It's a battle of good against evil, a battle between God and His heavenly forces on one side and the Devil and his imps on the other. God tries to steer us in the right direction, toward His blessings, and the Devil tries to wreck our lives any way he can. We can't fight and win this spiritual battle on our own, without God's help, but we can determine the outcome through our thoughts, prayers, decisions, and actions. This is why we are told in the Bible to "put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil" (Ephesians 6:11), and "resist the Devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

As with every other trap of the Devil, we can say no to discouragement. We can say no to *anything* that's negative, because we know that all negativity—all worry, fear, discouragement, condemnation, bitterness, and criticism—is from the Devil. And if the Lord tells us not to worry, which He does; if He tells us not to fear, which He does; if He tells us not to be condemned, which He does; if He tells us not to complain or grumble, which He does; if He tells us not to be bitter, which He does; if He tells us not to be critical, which He does; then we can do what He says. We don't have to yield to anything negative.

When I caught myself thinking discouraging thoughts the other day, I couldn't reason my way out of it by trying to tell myself that everything was going to be okay. I had to recognize that it was a spiritual attack and stop and pray for Jesus' help, claiming promises from His Word. I prayed, "Lord, You promised that You will sustain us if we cast our burdens on You, and that You will 'never suffer the





The secret is learning to recognize discouragement for the trap it is

righteous to be moved' (Psalm 55:22). But Your Word also tells us that 'he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. Let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways' (James 1:6-8). So Lord, I ask You to lift this burden of discouragement from me, and then help me to keep my mind on You and Your promises and off of the Devil and his discouraging thoughts and outright lies."

We can't help but have negative thoughts sometimes. We can't help but have initial feelings of discouragement or depression sometimes. We're still going to have to deal with those first "fiery darts" of temptation (Ephesians 6:16). The Devil's still going to try to whisper those initial thoughts in our ear, but we don't have to entertain them. It doesn't have to keep going on.

The Lord's miracle-working power can free us from the Devil's discouragement, but only if we turn to Him for help and reject the Devil's lies. As soon as we realize we're being tempted to become discouraged, if we'll focus our mind on the Lord and the positive, and refuse to give place to the negative thoughts, then we'll have the victory; we'll put a stop to it before it overwhelms us, before we fall prey to discouragement or sink into the depths of depression. It may take a few minutes to fight the battle. It may even take a few hours. But as long as we're fighting in the spirit, as long as we're desperate not to give in to it, we can be assured that we're going to get the victory because the Lord has promised it.

When we let the Devil put his spin on our problems, we lose sight of the Lord and His promises and forget His power. The secret is learning to recognize discouragement for the trap it is and take a stand against it immediately, because if we give in to it, the battle becomes much more difficult and it's much harder to pull out of it. The battle we have to fight in the beginning is nothing compared to the one we'll have to fight if we allow ourselves to fall into deep discouragement.



When the Devil attacks you with negative thoughts or feelings, fight back with promises from God's Word, such as "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1), "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19), and "You [God] will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3). Fight that oppression in the power of the Holy Spirit with the Word of God. Don't let it overcome you. Don't give in to it! As soon as you start to feel discouraged, as soon as you start to worry, hit the Devil in the face with the Word. Go on the attack!

It is possible to overcome discouragement. Nothing is impossible for God, and all things are possible to those who believe! (Luke 1:37). We *can* have victory!



why

praise?

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

PRAISE IS WHEN WE TELL GOD IN THOUGHT OR WORD OR SONG HOW MUCH WE LOVE AND APPRECIATE HIM. We can also praise Him with motions, like lifting our hands heavenward.

But have you ever wondered what the purpose of praising God is? Why does the all-powerful God even want or need our praises? Does He even appreciate them? I'm convinced that He does, based on the simple truth that we are made in God's own image (Genesis 1:27). We love to be appreciated, and since God patterned us after Himself, certainly He must enjoy our thanks and appreciation just as much, don't you think?

The Bible has *lots* to say about praising God (222 references in the Old Testament alone), and it was nearly always a spontaneous act on someone's part, like all the times King David praised God for His power and goodness in the book of Psalms.

Praise is something we initiate because we want to, like saying thank you when someone gives you a present. The giver shouldn't have to say, "Thank me!" Words of thanks should come naturally.

We praise Him because He hears and answers us.

"I will praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my salvation" (Psalm 118:21).

He hears us whenever we pray, but it seems we appreciate that most when we're asking Him to get us out of a tough situation, like one that took place in the city of Basel, Switzerland, in 1815.

Napoleon had just escaped from exile on the Island of Elba. As soon as he landed in France, he regrouped his army and resumed his campaign to conquer all of Europe. In his army's path to Belgium was the city of Basel. One of Napoleon's generals, Barbanègre, had besieged the city and threatened to raze it if they did not surrender.

Instead, a group of Christians in Basel convinced city officials to give God a chance to work. They prayed earnestly for God to intervene for them, and they began thanking Him in advance by pledging to start a school to train Christian workers after He did.

Soon Russian and Hungarian forces arrived and attacked the French. Then a sudden thunderstorm caused the French cannons to get bogged down in mud. General Barbanègre had no choice but to surrender—and Basel was spared.

Because God had heard and answered their plea in their hour of desperate need, the people of Basel made good on their promise and put their thanks into action by training and sending hundreds of Christian workers around the world—an operation that is still going strong today.

We praise Him because He is good.
“Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good”
(Psalm 135:3). “I will praise Your name
for Your loving kindness and Your truth”
(Psalm 138:2).

Isn't it great to know that we have a loving and kind God who can forgive all of our sins and shortcomings? And isn't it wonderful that God gives us so much truth to help us live our lives to the fullest? We'd really be lost without Him! How could we *not* be grateful, like just about everyone in the following story?

A judge and a general were traveling together when they stopped for a rest. There they observed several Christian women taking care of some lepers. The judge was impressed with the love and concern that the women showed the lepers, but he couldn't understand why they would risk their own health and happiness for the sake of a few wretched lepers. “Why do you suppose that is?” he asked the general.

“It's because they have the gratitude attitude,” the general replied.

“Gratitude! What have those lepers ever done for them that these women should feel gratitude?”

“I'd have to explain that with a story,” said the general. “I once knew a man who was in deep trouble financially. If he didn't repay his debts in full within two days, his house and all of his possessions would be sold to pay off his creditors and the man would be left destitute. But a kind stranger paid his debts, and he was saved from ruin.”

“And who was the benefactor?” the judge asked.

The general smiled. He had been discovered. “I had to help him,” the general explained. “You see, a similar thing happened to me many years ago, and someone paid a debt for me. I am forever grateful, and that attitude compels me

to keep giving to others. In the same way, we are grateful to Jesus Christ our Savior for paying our debts and freeing us from death. These women feel the same way that I do, and they have only one motive in helping the lepers—to show their gratitude to Him who paid their debts.”

We praise Him because His works are wonderful.

“I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well” (Psalms 139:14). “O Lord, You are my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, for You have done wonderful things” (Isaiah 25:1).

Once while visiting my parents, I found one of my elementary school compositions entitled, “What Would I Do If I Knew I Would Be Blind Tomorrow?” My answer was that I would go into the forest and admire nature. I would take in every bit of it that I could during that last day of sight. God's creation is marvelous, fascinating, awe-inspiring, yet how often do we thank God for it, or for the gift of sight to be able to see it, like the man in this next story?

A group of visitors at a mountain resort stood and watched the sunset from a lobby window. A large rough-looking man lingered until the last glow faded, and seemed thrilled through and through by the beauty of it all.

Afterwards one of the other visitors, more observant than the rest, said to the man, “You certainly enjoyed that sunset. Are you an artist?”

“No, I'm a plumber,” he replied with a slow grin, “but I was blind for five years.”

There are a multitude of other reasons why we should praise God, not the least of which is that it deepens our relationship with Him. Try it, and you'll be sold on praise! ■

**WHAT
WOULD I DO
IF I KNEW
I WOULD
BE BLIND
TOMORROW?**



*You can transform
your “desert”
into a beautiful
place.*

BACA

By Virginia Brandt Berg

IN PSALM 84, KING DAVID DECLARED, “BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE STRENGTH IS IN GOD. Who passing through the Valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength” (verses 5–7, paraphrased).

You won’t find the Valley of Baca on modern maps of the Holy Land, and it isn’t clear whether David was referring to an actual geographical location or using Baca (derived from the Hebrew word *bakah*, which means “weeping”) figuratively. If figuratively, Baca is a place where all of us have been at some time or other. It’s a place of suffering, a place of sorrow, a place of hardship. It’s a dry, dusty, desert place, this Baca.

The rest of the Psalm brings out the beautiful thought that

whenever we pass through such a place, we have an opportunity to turn that difficulty or disappointment, that sorrow or hardship, whatever it may be, into a blessing.

I’m reminded now of a friend of ours who has done just that. Some time ago he became gravely ill, and it looked like the end of the active, productive life he had always led. It looked like the end, but he turned his Valley of Baca into a great blessing. He “dug a well there,” and as a result he has become even more loving and patient and sympathetic and an even greater blessing to others. He let his “Baca” bring out the best in him.

When you find yourself in the Valley of Baca, get down and dig deep in your heart to find out why God has brought this thing into your life, and if He wants

to say something special to you about it. Do some real digging. Dig a well there, and then dig in God’s Word until He reveals His precious truth to you. You can become victorious in *any* situation, even one as seemingly hopeless as this Valley of Baca. You can transform your “desert” into a beautiful place, like my friend did.

Someone has said that a well doesn’t look very appealing beside a running stream, and I would have to agree. I once sat by a mountain stream in a magnificent forest, and I can’t imagine any well looking nearly as refreshing as that beautiful, bubbling, crystal clear stream did. But if you put any well out in a dry, dusty desert, the water in that well will look mighty good!

When, in time of sorrow and distress, you can stand on the



fear of failure

FEEDING READING

promises of God and trust in His goodness, others will see your faith, and it will be to you and them as a well in a hard, dry, dusty place. That's when your faith shines brightest: when it causes you to rise above difficulty.

But some people just settle down in their sorrows, they sort of luxuriate in their misery or "martyrdom." They stay in the valley of weeping, in the Valley of Baca, like one woman who came to me for sympathy. True, she was having terrible troubles, but she saw only herself, only her sorrow. She wasn't dwelling on God's faithfulness or His promises or stirring up her faith at all. Her faith could have transformed her valley of suffering into a place of blessing and refreshing, but she didn't let it.

The Christian life is supposed to be one that is superior to circumstances. We can live above it all, because we have a loving, all-powerful God and all of His wonderful promises. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

We are not to stay in that dry, desolate valley, nor are we to merely endure troubles. Just to endure isn't victory! We are to praise God and shout the victory even before we see it. We are

Fear of failure is a lack of faith and can actually cause failure; only faith succeeds.
Isaiah 7:9b
Matthew 13:58
Matthew 17:19–20
James 1:6–7

If we rely only on ourselves and carnal means, we have everything to fear because we very likely will fail.
1 Samuel 2:9b
Psalm 33:16–17
Psalm 127:1a
Jeremiah 17:5
John 15:5

When we trust the Lord, we have

to stand upon God's Word and prove His promises. That is how we get victory out of seeming defeat! And when we overcome that way, we find many divinely given living waters springing up. "The rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength."

So the next time you find yourself in the Valley of Baca, reread this passage from Psalm 84 and put it into practice. ■

nothing to fear, because He never fails.
Numbers 23:19
Psalm 37:5
Jeremiah 32:27
Matthew 19:26
Philippians 4:13

God can work through us even better when we feel weak and incapable.
Isaiah 40:29
2 Corinthians 4:7
2 Corinthians 12:9–10

If we believe and obey God's Word, success is assured.
Deuteronomy 29:9
Joshua 1:8
2 Chronicles 20:20b

Psalm 1:2–3
Matthew 7:24–25
James 1:25

Keep your eyes on Jesus.
Psalm 27:13
Matthew 14:25–31
Hebrews 12:2–3

As long as our desire is to please and follow the Lord, He will see to it that His purpose is accomplished.
2 Chronicles 16:9a
2 Chronicles 31:21
Psalm 37:23–24
Ecclesiastes 8:12b
2 Corinthians 3:4–5
Philippians 1:6
2 Timothy 1:12b

*We can live
above it all,
because we have
a loving,
all-powerful
God
and all of
His wonderful
promises.*

IT WAS JUST A LITTLE THING, THAT SMILE ON MY BABY'S FACE, BUT IT CHANGED MY PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE.

As he woke and looked up at me, he was looking at what mattered most in the world to him—me! He didn't care that his diaper needed changing or that I was dressed in mismatched pajamas, my hair a mess. He just loved me and loved being with me. He didn't need perfection; love made it all right. That moment of holding him and taking in those rays of love clarified something I'd been thinking about earlier.

The lack of perfection in life has always rubbed me the wrong way. When someone said or did something that irked me, I'd often argue my case against it in my mind. *Why do there have to be things like personality clashes, carelessness, inconsideration, injustice, pes-*

simism, putdowns? These things are real, and they are wrong! I wish these things wouldn't exist. If everyone, myself included, could just get their act together, my life could be one of blissful perfection. Perfection, I reasoned, was the only thing that could ever relieve my irritations. But I also knew that could never be. This was real life. I needed another option.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that what I really wanted was for the world to revolve around me—my wishes, my feelings, my preferences, my priorities. Something had to change, and this time it had to be me, regardless of the faults of others. But how? I'd tried before.

Then that morning, as I held my baby, a whisper of a thought came to me. *Would you want your baby to be perfect right from the start?*

After pondering that thought, I couldn't imagine something I'd want less. If he'd been able to walk and run the day he was born, I'd never get to see the look of thrill and accomplishment on his face when he took his first steps, and I'd also miss that special feeling of holding him in my arms, knowing that he was completely dependent on me. If he had been able to talk perfectly from the time he was born, I'd never experience the joy of hearing him speak his first word. If he knew everything that an adult knows, I'd never get to see him overcome with wonder at some new discovery and I'd never have the fulfillment of teaching him something new. So many things I'd miss. No, his imperfection makes him just perfect. I wouldn't have him any other way!

What is it then, I asked myself, that makes his imperfection



different from the other imperfections around me?

And the answer came. *It's love.*

That was it! That was what I was lacking. That was what I needed more of in order to cope bravely and cheerfully when confronted by problems I wished didn't exist.

Think how much you'd miss if you and everyone around you were perfect from the start. You'd miss the unpredictability of life that adds the sense of surprise; the joy of forgiving and being forgiven; the strong, abiding bonds of friendship that are formed through adversity, and the positive character traits that are formed much the same way.

Adding negative thoughts to a negative situation, I realized, never brings positive results. I determined then and there to look for and find the positive opportunities and experiences that are hidden behind the mask of imperfection.

When my baby couldn't sleep later that day, I decided to make the best of a difficult situation by putting my new lesson into practice. I put what *I* had been sure was best for him and me on

hold, and my husband and I took some time to sing and laugh with him. It was a perfectly happy moment that we all would have missed had everything been "perfect" that day.

Every situation and person we encounter can make our lives a ride of joy and surprise, if we look beyond. Difficulties, losses, hurts, lacks—think of each as a clue in a treasure hunt, the door to a secret vault where you will find beautiful treasures from God. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). ■

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**IF YOU ARE FINDING MORE
DIRT IN THE GARDEN OF
YOUR LIFE THAN FLOWERS,
MAYBE YOU'VE GOT YOUR
EYES TOO CLOSE TO THE
GROUND. LOOK UP!**

Tribulation Triumphs

The Great Tribulation, the last three and a half years of the Antichrist's rule that immediately precedes the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, is sadly misunderstood by many people. They envision the Tribulation as a time of complete defeat and a terrifying time of hell on earth for all believers in the true God. But I can prove from the Bible that this is *not* the case, thank God!

FIRST, HERE IS THE APOSTLE MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT of what Jesus told His disciples about the Tribulation and the events leading up to it.

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation' [the image of the Beast—an idol of the Antichrist], spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand). ... then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."

—Matthew 24:3–15, 21

Yes, it's going to be a time of awesome and terrible events, but God's people are going to have even more awesome powers to protect and defend and deliver and keep them going right to the End! Yes, it's going to be a time of great persecution and great battles, but we don't need to fear the Tribulation, because if we're God's, He's going to take care of us somehow.

He's also going to use mighty men and women, His prophets and prophetesses, to lead His people and, with supernatural help from Heaven, protect them from the Antichrist and his forces as they continue to proclaim the truth until the day that Jesus returns, when "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up ... to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

"The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits" (Daniel 11:32). The people who truly know Jesus are going to be strong, in spite of the Antichrist and in spite of persecution! The worse things get, the more God's Spirit is going to be poured out from on high to help us withstand the evil forces that will be warring against us. "As your days, so shall your strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25).

All through the Bible there are stories about how the Lord miraculously empowered and protected His prophets and people, so I'm sure our power is going to be tremendously increased and magnified and multiplied during the End-time. God is going to give supernatural powers to those who believe in, know, and follow Him, so that they will be able

By David Brandt Berg

**ALTHOUGH THEY WILL BE DIFFICULT DAYS, GOD'S
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not only to defend themselves, but even to attack the forces of the Antichrist.

Revelation chapter 11 describes two of God's Endtime witnesses who will have power to bring curses and plagues upon the wicked and to actually call down fire from God to devour their enemies. What a picture of mighty men and women of God fighting victorious battles over the minions of Hell! The Antichrist won't be able to stop these two until just three and a half days before Jesus returns. The Antichrist will finally be allowed to kill them, but as the wicked are rejoicing over the two witnesses' deaths, suddenly Jesus will return in His glory to resurrect and rapture them and the rest of the "dead in Christ," the saved from all ages (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:51–54). It will be a mighty triumph for God's people, showing that He holds power over death itself.

I think these two witnesses of Revelation chapter 11 are also symbolic of all those who know and side with God. I believe they'll all have "power for the hour" in that day to help them survive as long as possible. The apostle Paul wrote, "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20). And where satanic power is going to abound, God's power is going to abound much more to protect His own. God's purpose is not going to be defeated. He's going to have millions of witnesses right up to the End.

God's Word makes it very clear that He will defend His own during those last three and a half years, not only by


means of the mighty powers He will give them, but also by means of monsters and plagues that He will send to afflict their enemies. In Revelation chapters 8 and 9, we read about the "trumpets of Tribulation" and the mighty judgments that they unleash—horrible monsters released from the "bottomless pit," sent by God to torment the wicked—but He commands them not to hurt those who have the seal of God in their forehead (Revelation 9:4). When God lets loose those pestilences and plagues and monsters on the people of the Devil, the wicked, the wicked will be so busy in their futile attempts to defend themselves that they won't have much time to persecute the righteous. They may catch up with and kill some of God's people, as they are sworn to do so to those who refuse to take the mark of the Beast and worship the Antichrist—some will suffer martyrdom, even as some do today—but a host of God's people are going to march triumphant, protected by God, straight through the Tribulation!

So don't look ahead to the Tribulation as a horrible defeat with nothing but persecution and suffering. There will be some of that, but I'm convinced from both Scripture and the nature of God and His dealings with man that it's going to be primarily a time of great victory over the forces of Satan—a tremendous triumph over the anti-Christ wicked. Although they will be difficult days, God's people are going to shine brighter with the truth than they have ever shone before.

If you belong to Jesus and are following Him closely, you'll have what it takes when the time comes. You'll have power for the hour and every hour—the supernatural, miraculous power of God. The forces of God cannot be defeated, and the plan of God cannot be frustrated. If you're on God's side, you're bound to win. You *can't* lose. God's going to take care of you and use you like you've never been used before! ■

Let's start anew

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE



LIFE'S MANY PROBLEMS AND WORRIES have pulled you away from Me. Your self-doubt and fear of failure have weakened your faith that I hear your prayers and am concerned and want to help you. But I'm telling you now that these doubts and the discouragement and depression they lead to are not from Me. They are straight from the enemy of your soul, the Devil. He wants to beat you down and destroy your happiness, but I want to rescue you and lift you up and make you happier than you ever dreamed possible. I want to give you a new start.

When you feel discouraged over some mistake you've made or the way you are, remember that I specialize in using weak, fallible people to show My love to the world. I allowed the disappointments and setbacks you've experienced over the years in order to make you more gentle, more compassionate, more understanding of others' weaknesses and problems—more like Me—so you can be a bigger help to them.

So you see, even deep dark experiences are good for you, and it doesn't need to stop there. If you will put yourself into My hands and be soft and moldable, like clay in the hands of a master potter, I will remake you. I will take your broken dreams, your heartaches, your disappointments, and with My hands of love make you into a better "pot." It may not be as grand or beautiful or perfect as what you had in mind, but it will be perfect in My sight, perfect for the role I have for you to play here, and perfect for your place in My heavenly kingdom.