

School of Hard Knocks

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[0 : 00] The School of Hard Knocks to 11.

It says, 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. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

I'll let you take over there, can you? There's a problem. Verse 11. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Just some thoughts around this passage and what we can learn here today.

[1 : 30] We're living in days of a downward drift, of a slip sliding, a back sliding. We've lost something, something precious. And it's like these days some couldn't care less about spiritual things.

For some it's a mere lip service. It's just token. And when things get tough, people get flaky. Paul says, Sounds like you didn't know about the health, wealth and prosperity gospel.

Paul says, We are troubled on every side. Who feels a bit like that? I'm sure there's more hands that would go up if you're really honest today. But our world cares little for the Bible.

And meanwhile, Christians are fair game. We're in the target side. It's in the crosshairs, aren't we? The media mocks us. It mocks anything to do with decency and honour and morality.

The world laughs at Christians. And as Christians, we're in the devil's target sides. And our Lord never said it would be easy. He never said that would be the case.

[2 : 34] Paul says, We are troubled on every side. This message is to encourage you that if you're feeling like that, Hey, it's normal.

It's normal. You're probably in the right place. You're probably doing something right if you're troubled on every side. And here was Paul.

He had the ministry credentials. He'd earned them at this school. At the old Bible school. The school of hard knocks. He was qualified.

He was a workman. Approved unto God. 2 Corinthians 6. Verse 4. He says, But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God. How? In much patience.

And in afflictions. In necessities. In distresses. Verse 5. In stripes. In imprisonments. In tumults. In labours. In watchings. In fastings. Paul had earned his stripes.

[3 : 30] He'd bought them literally on his back. He'd been beaten. He'd gone through sleepless nights. Paul says, We are troubled. On every side. And as a pastor.

As Bible believing Christians. We can get troubled at times. Can't we? I know some of you. Some of you tell me of your troubles. Some of you don't tell me of your troubles.

But you're troubled too. Paul says it here again. Great is my boldness. 2 Corinthians 7. Verse 4. I'm filled with comfort. I'm exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

Verse 5. For when we were coming to Macedonia. Our flesh had no rest. But again he says. We were troubled. On every side. Without were fightings.

Within were fears. Friends. These days we live. Are troubling times. Even within churches. There's people who make fun. Of Bible truth.

[4 : 25] As if it's outdated. It needs replacing. People want something ear pleasing. Flesh pleasing. They will not enjoy the word of God. They don't want it. Even the people who call themselves Christians.

Don't seem to care. Half the time. Paul was troubled. On every side. Yet rejoicing. Troubled. Yet not distressed. He said.

I am exceeding joyful. In all our tribulation. Is the church going to go. Through tribulation. Yes it is. I don't believe we'll see the great tribulation.

But we will see much tribulation. Much trouble. That's normal. Expected. You're not alone. If you're feeling. Wow I've been going through the ringer lately.

I know some of you have been telling me stories. And it's amazing what you're going through. What you've gone through. What you're still yet to go through. But you've got to get there. Amen. Amen. You will get there. We will see much tribulation.

[5 : 26] It's normal. It's actually a sign. You're probably doing something right. Here is Paul. Not long after. He'd been stoned.

Almost to death. Dragged out of the city. By his heels I suppose. Left for dead. Treated like a dead man. Acts 14.22.

Confirming the souls of the disciples. And exhorting them. To continue in the faith. And that we must. Through much tribulation. Enter into. Into.

The kingdom of God. Troubled. On every side. Much. Tribulation. Get used to it. Don't let it put you off. It's normal.

You're a normal Christian. Troubled. Troubled. Troubled. Troubled on every side. I'm a troubled pastor. Also. It troubles me to see many. Who are just playing.

[6 : 22] Church. Playing games. Playing with sin. Playing with fire. Playing with false doctrine. Paul says.

We are troubled. On every side. But he says. We are not distressed. We know God is working in hearts. Even though we don't always see.

The signs. And we know God is calling out of people. For his name. And God is saving such as will call on his name. And we see troubles within. Without. We see a world.

That hates God. And will trouble us. A world that is torn. Families in strife. And heartache. Unbelief. And godless living.

And for some. It can be like. Life's trials. Are just so heavy. And they can bring. Tons of bitterness. And sorrow. And loss of hope.

[7 : 18] Paul says. He got perplexed. In that first scripture we read. I get perplexed too.

Perplexed. I ask myself. Why is this happening? How can this be? What is going on? It's truly perplexing isn't it? The perplexities of life. We just can't get our head around.

What's going on? We wonder. Why is this happening? And yes. At times we are perplexed. But. Not in despair. What makes spiritual greatness.

When we are troubled. How can we overcome? How can we get through this? These setbacks. These trials of life. Paul knew.

He knew troubles. He knew what it meant. What it took. And in order for us to live. The victorious Christian life. We've got to go through some things.

[8 : 17] Don't be deterred. Sister. Brother. Go through. With God. Through those battles. Through those tough things.

So that you can get the victory. And you look back and say. Wow. God was with me right through that whole stage of my life. When it was tough going.

And Paul shows us that authentic Christianity is. This blueprint. This blueprint. If you like. We are troubled. On every side.

Yet not distressed. We have a faith. That will go the distance. That will. Fight against the odds. A faith that will shine through.

Even though. We're going through the very darkest hours. And the hardest of times. The most discouraging of times. Now someone was sharing today.

[9 : 09] How discouraging. Things can be. Troubled. On every side. Yet not distressed. Not distressed. We might face the most bitter persecution.

And hatred from even our loved ones. Because we will not accommodate sin. Or the devil's lies. And maybe we'll even get accused. Of being intolerant.

Usually those who are saying you're intolerant. Are quite intolerant people. Yes I am intolerant. Intolerant of doctrines of devils. Intolerant of the lies the media tells me to believe.

It's a good thing. Sometimes. And so Paul says yes. We may get persecuted. But. We are not forsaken. The faith that we see as Bible faith.

Will go through the hard yards. The hard yards. Some of you have been through harder yards than I have. God bless you. You'll get a greater result.

[10:16] At the end of your life. It seems that. These days. So many Christians. Sadly. Are casual. And half-hearted. It's like it doesn't take much to rock someone.

Who has shallow foundations. Who has this kind of superficial. Skin deep kind of faith. Sometimes people get easily rocked. It's as if when you strike the least bit of difficulty.

Or inconvenience. They are put off. But friends. The Bible says no. Don't be like that. Get used to times of trouble. Persecution is the norm.

It's meant to be par for the course. We're meant to have persecution as normality. Now there's a lot of talk about the persecuted church. Somewhere over there.

Some other place. Some other country. But if we were where God wanted us to be. Then we would be the persecuted church. Right here.

[11:17] Right now. That's what we are meant to be. In 2 Timothy 3. Verse 12. Paul says. Yea. And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus. Shall suffer persecution.

That's a challenge isn't it? So people have settled by and large for a cosy. Comfortable. Carefree Christianity. By and large a Christianity of convenience.

When it's easy. Yea. I'll be a Christian. I'll profess to know and follow Jesus. When it's all fine and dandy and easy. But when the tough things happen. They just seem to fade away.

People these days. They just seem to shrink. From hard work. They don't do the hard yards. And when there's the least bit of opposition. And difficulty. They just wilt.

And fade. And there's this predominant laziness. And a lack of discipline. And so I want to urge you today. This is a little bit of a stirring.

[12:18] Prompting. This morning. That I put to you. That Bible Christianity. Is the school of hard knocks. There's a sense of discipleship.

Discipline. And people who have been in the military. Know what discipline is about. Discipline.

There's a discipleship. It takes discipline. And so I would urge you.

Brothers and sisters. To be willing. To suffer some inconvenience. For the sake of the kingdom of God. I encourage you. To go the second mile. To get radical.

To strive in a godly way. To strive for God. Even unto blood. Hebrews 12. 4. The writer says. You have not yet resisted. Unto blood. Striving against sin.

Are you really? Fair dinkum. Strive against sin. Be willing to go the distance. Do the hard yards.

[13:14] What will it take to put you off? It depends on where your treasure is. Doesn't it? Doesn't it? Where is your treasure? We need to go through the school.

The same school as Paul. Job was a student in this school. Job was a graduate. The school of hard knocks. And friends today.

We may get cast down. But we are not destroyed. This is all part of our training. Isn't it? I mean. I could use the military analogy again.

You know. Those sergeants at the parade ground. In the recruit course. They bark the orders. They get in your face. And they make you push yourself to the limit.

And to work hard. Through the obstacle courses and all that. But really. They're doing it for our good. So that we'll be a strong soldier.

[14:13] And it's like that sometimes with the Christian life I'll put to you. That. It's part of our training. It's part of our training. And as disciples of Christ.

We have enrolled in the school. Of hard knocks. So let's just look at some aspects of this school. If you like. You know. The Bible says we're disciples.

Which means learners. There's an analogy there. There's a kind of symbolism there. Of school. Of the class. As it were. The school of Christ.

If you like. Can be. I believe. Compared with. As the term goes. The school of hard knocks. And this is the kind of faith that stands out.

So. Firstly. The school of hard knocks. Cause for some things. Number one. Godly courage. Courage. We have need of godly courage.

[15:12] It takes courage to enrol in this school. It's a life changing school. For this school of hard knocks. Wimps. Need not apply. It's going to take some men and women.

With stamina. With guts. People who want to be mature in their faith. And yet. A courage to say. I'm inadequate. As well.

Because none of us measure up really. We're all weak. But we have need of courage. God calls us to battle.

And not to be as it were. Chocolate soldiers. You know. You can get. Soldiers like Freddo Frogs. In the tin foil. Made like a soldier. And put it in the sun. And it melts away. We're called to be real soldiers.

To real battles. And sure. We may get knocked down in life. Some of you have been knocked down harder than me. You've had some pretty heavy hits.

[16:13] Through life. I know that. But you get back on your feet again. Amen. Don't you? That's what you do. Amen. Amen. You get back in the fight again.

You don't slink off with the quitters. And sure. We may feel at times just like that. Like life's a boxing match. We're cast down. But not destroyed.

It's not knockout yet. You've still got some get up and go there. I hear that many claim to be spiritual people. But give it time.

And they show the stuff they're made out of. Amen. It shows through, doesn't it? Amen. It can show through. And show through soon enough. If you scratch the surface, you see what people are made out of.

Apply a bit of pressure. And you see what people are made out of. It takes courage. Brother. Sister. Have courage. And God wants to raise us up.

[17:15] As a people that are courageous men. And courageous women for God. The school of hard knocks. It will separate the men from the boys. But it won't be your strength.

It will be his. Amen. It will be his strength. Because we know. Well. We're all weak. But we're called to boldness. And so. It takes courage to be in this number.

To enrol in this school. And will you join? Will you align yourself? Will you join this side? What company will you keep?

Will you team up with questionable things? Will you join up with the compromises? Or will you stand fast, squarely?

And have the courage of your convictions? We need to choose our path wisely. We must enter into this school. As it were. And it will be dangerous too.

[18:16] Only a few will make the grade. As you see back in Acts 5 verse 13. That only a few dared to join themselves to the church of God.

Now this was a context of persecution. Of dangerous times to be a Christian. In Acts 5 verse 13 it says that some dared not join himself to them.

No one dared to join them. It wasn't the popular thing. The easy thing. It took courage. And it takes courage. We have much need of courage today.

And these are days that call for an unreserved kind of Christianity. To not hold back. To pull out all the stops. In Proverbs 28 verse 1 it says, The wicked flee when no man pursueth.

But the righteous are bold as a lion. That's what we're meant to be. As bold as a lion.

[19:21] There's a courage there. There's a boldness. Not to flee. But to be as bold as a lion. And this is the kind of faith we call to. This courage. That will win through.

Day by day. 2 Corinthians 4. Paul says, Again in the context of troubles and trials. We faint not. Though our outward man perish.

Yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment.

Worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. So, verse 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. He says we faint not. Our outward man perish. Now this body used to be in much better condition than it is now. And tomorrow will be less so.

[20:21] Our outward man is perishing. Isn't it? But our inward man is renewed day by day. And so we don't lose heart. It's just temporary. What we're going through at the moment.

And 2 Timothy 2.3. Paul says to Timothy. Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. So let us report for duty. Let us work while it is day.

Let us not shirk. We will work. And we'll endure hardness. We are made of the stuff that makes for good soldiers of Jesus Christ. And so Galatians 6.9 it says.

Let us not be weary in well doing. Well for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. So let's learn to be faithful in the little things.

Have courage. Brother, sister. To enrol in this school as it were. The school of hard knocks. And this school calls for us to press on. To press on regardless.

[21 : 19] To go forward despite knock back after knock back. Despite knock after knock. We will hold our ground. We'll have courage. Psalm 62.

The psalmist cried. Truly my soul waiteth upon God. For from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation.

He is my defence. I shall not be greatly moved. I shall not be moved. Because God is my rock. And let us likewise be unmovable. Unflinching.

I'm encouraging you this morning. To realise. If you're feeling like I'm troubled on every side. It's normal. And that you should have courage. Have courage.

Don't be deterred. Secondly. This school calls for godly choices. Faith makes godly choices.

[22 : 16] Right choices. And faith under pressure will not flinch. It will choose the right. Some people talk as if God were real in their lives. Yet they act like he's not real.

Like he's not even there. Titus 1.15. It talks about people defiled and unbelieving. Even their mind and conscience defiled. They profess that they know God.

But in works they deny him. Have you ever met people like that? Oh they're so spiritual. A lot of spiritual talk. Blah blah blah blah blah blah. Spiritual.

Spiritual. Spiritual. But in works they deny him. Doesn't stack up what they claim. But real faith works in real life.

It's real where the rubber hits the road. It's real when trouble is all around. This faith will hold steady. God wants to road test your faith.

[23 : 13] That's what it's like isn't it? Now I used to work in a tyre factory. And they would punish tyres. They would punish them. See how long it would take for them to rupture.

And God wants to road test your faith. But he won't take you too hard. He won't take you that far. That you're not going to make it. And as friends.

Friends as people. We need to come to know the desperation. Of faith. Faith that will work in the rat race. Faith that will work in those troubled times.

Faith that will work in that treadmill of life. Faith that will work when we're troubled on every side. Authentic faith. Faith. And faith such as this will make wise choices.

It will go God's way no matter what. No matter how hard it is. It will make the tough choices. The hard choices. Moses made a choice. By faith. He chose to be with God's people.

[24 : 11] He chose to, as it were, take a desk at the school of hard knocks. In Hebrews 11. By faith Moses. He was called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. But he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God.

Than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Friends. Faith makes a choice. Faith makes a choice. We see Hebrews 11. Those men and women through Hebrews 11. Everyone made a choice.

The heroes of faith. Men and women. They all made a choice. By faith. And by faith Moses. He chose a people. He chose the people of God. He chose to identify with them.

To be with them. To belong to them. He chose the church. As it were. The church in the wilderness. He could have tried to please the people who wanted Egypt. You know. Some people that got hungry for the Egyptian food.

Now I don't know what Egyptian food tastes like. But it sounds good here, doesn't it? In Numbers 11. It talks about the people here. They were a mixed multitude.

[25 : 15] It was kind of a mixture of people. And then verse 5 is it. It says they remember the fish. Now here they were.

Now God was providing them miraculously. Manna from heaven. Supernatural manna.

Supernatural food from heaven. And here were these people. They just wanted to throw another onion on the barbie.

As it were. They were having this miraculous manna. Falling from God. But they still wanted Pharaoh's fancy food. The cucumbers.

The melons. The leeks. The onions. The garlic. Makes you feel hungry, doesn't it? And that's what these people were like. They hungered and hankered after the pleasures of sin, as it were. The smorgasbord of Pharaoh.

The tasty fish. And the onions. And the garlic. And the salad bar. What did Moses do? He said, no. I'm going through.

[26 : 11] I'm not going back. I'm going through. I'm not going back to the world. Back to Egypt. He chose the school. Of hard knocks. And he chose by faith. To go into the wilderness.

He made a choice. What about you? Faith makes a choice. It makes a choice. Godly choice.

Thirdly, we're seeing godly convictions are called for in this school, as it were.

This new school of Christianity these days is sadly compromised and carnal. It's bending and weak. It's giving ground every which way.

It's truly ecumenical. Ecumenical. Don't rock the boat. Don't stand against false teaching. We're all one big happy family, they say.

And it seems many people know little of the school of hard knocks that will stand fast. That will stir and challenge.

[27 : 11] That there are some non-negotiables. There is truth that we can believe in. Convictions. Convictions. Now this world might call us politically incorrect.

The time will come when I'll be hauled off to jail. I wouldn't be surprised. Honestly. We're not talking about preferences.

There's a lot of talk about that. These are convictions. Convictions. Deliberate choices. Bible-based convictions. Based upon Bible principles.

On Bible standards. That's what we're talking about. And we will be mocked for them. It's not popular. And as a church.

God helping us. We're steering this fellowship. In a godly direction. That we will not be moved off track. Other than by God.

[28 : 15] We'll be moved by God. But not by the crowd. And so as God's people. We should be marked by convictions. That count. No matter what. Truth that we'll stand for.

And hold fast. Even when the popular church. Will swallow the lie. We won't compromise. God's promises are no less true now. Than they ever were.

And we are not going to budge. We will hold fast to truth. We must. I received some comments from a friend. Lately. Along this line.

Talking about truth. And I'm quoting in part. That God is called the God of truth. Deuteronomy 32.4. It says. In part. He's a God of truth.

And without iniquity. God's truth is relevant. For all generations. It does not change. Psalm 100. It says. For the Lord is good. His mercy is everlasting.

[29 : 09] And his truth endureth to all. Generations. It doesn't change. God's truth doesn't change. And friends. These days. Convictions count.

And we want to be in that school. Don't we? That we've got godly convictions. That we're men of truth. Women of truth. In short supply. But still. That's what we want to be. A people who regard truth.

As what matters. And we need leaders. As Jethro instructed Moses to search for. In Exodus 18. Men. Able men. Such as. Fear God.

Men of truth. Hating covetousness. Or greed. Men of truth. And this friend of mine. I'm still quoting. In part. He says. We've been too trusting. Of an education system. Which though once founded upon truth. Yet has since suppressed the truth of God. Yet we unquestionably.

[30 : 07] Trust our children to it. And even teachers in most Christian schools. Have been indoctrinated. By the same atheistic world view. That trains teachers in the public indoctrination system.

Too trusting. We've been too trusting. Of the scientific establishment. Which though once founded upon truth. Has long since been driven by falsehood. Greed.

And the agenda. Of social engineers. We're too trusting. Of the medical establishment. Though once founded upon truth. Is now driven by big pharma companies.

Fears of litigation. A lack of respect for life. Doctors. Who do speak truth. Such as warning about same sex relationships. Are silenced. And lose their jobs.

We're too trusting. Of government. Which though once founded upon Christian truth. The concept of prime minister. As primary accountable servant. Has largely been hijacked.

[31 : 04] By socialistic atheists. Who seek not the good. Of the nation. But popularity. Money. Fame. And freedom. From morality. We've been too trusting.

Of the media. Though the inventors of TV and radio. Were God fearing. As were many of the scientists. Who did. The ground work. For modern technology. Yet the media.

Has been taken over. By the godless. We've been too trusting. Of publishing companies. Though the printing press. Was first invented. For the dissemination. Of the bible. Yet. Even so called. Bible publishing houses. Have been largely taken over. By those who wish to promote. A agenda. Or make profit. From the sale of Christian books. You know. It's sad to see. What Courant is selling. To be honest with you. We've been too trusting. Of the institutionalized church. Though it was once. The pillar and ground. Of the truth. It's degenerated.

[32 : 02] Into an organization. Which often values. The traditions. And reasonings of man. Above the word of God. There's many opposing forces. Against the truth. And the more Christianity.

Loses its influence. The less truth. Is respected. Sought after. Defended. And practiced. And so. Let us learn to teach. Our own families. God's truth.

To defend it. And stand for it. Even as. The world plummets. Into godlessness. And as truth becomes. More scarce. We need to be a people. Of conviction. We need to be people.

Of conviction. End quote. And so. We're called to integrity today. We need men and women. Of truth. Ever more so. In these days. To enrol in this school.

Which teaches us the truth. The bible school. As it were. The school. Of hard knocks. To enrol in that. To become students.

[32 : 56] Of the truth. To worship the lord of truth. And to not be pretenders. But to be real. And so friends today. Let's be such men and women. Who will not be detoured.

We will not be. Moved off track. But we'll walk together. We'll march together. Lockstep. With the truth. And we won't cut corners.

But we'll tell the truth. Now I know sometimes. It's par for the course. For a pastor. When you tell people the truth. They sometimes rile up.

Paul said. Am I becoming your enemy. Because I tell you the truth. That's what I feel like sometimes. People don't like the truth. They don't want to hear it. That's all the more reason. Why we need to tell it.

All of us. All of us. And strongly so. To have the gumption. To tell the truth. No matter what. And this is the truth. The word of truth. God's book.

[33 : 55] It's his truth to us. It says in Psalm 107. Verse 20. He sent his word. And he healed them. And delivered them. From their destructions.

Healing. Is going to come. By the word. The healing of broken lives. Of hurting hearts. The healing of the broken hearted.

Will come. As he sends his word. And he heals us. The sure word of God. No substitute will do. Don't keep it to yourself. But deliver it.

Faithfully. So friends. Be encouraged. Get ready for some battles. And hold your ground. For the truth. And against error. In 1 Corinthians 2.15. It says.

But he that is spiritual. Judges. All things. There's a time to judge. Some things are right. Some things are wrong. He that is spiritual.

[34 : 48] Judges. Discerns. The truth hurts. Sometimes people are going to get hurt. When you're honest enough. To tell them the truth. And we're living in times.

Where there's lying prophets. And confusing messages. All around. TV preachers. Be very discerning. Be very discerning.

Our mission is to impart truth. In this careless world. A world. Heading full pelt. On a collision course. With God's short judgment.

And it's as if today. There's people playing cubby houses. Have you seen that? Have your kids ever played cubby houses? They get a little table cloth. And they hide under it.

As if. Oh. They can't see where I am. Playing hide and seek. Under cubby houses. People are like that these days. The Bible calls it a refuge.

[35 : 46] Of lies. A refuge of lies. You can't hide from God. You can't hide from his x-ray vision. His penetrating gaze. And.

All that is sham. And substitute. Is just like a cubby house. That will be swept away. And shame for what it is. A refuge. A refuge. Of lies. And the majority will be lost.

The terrors of hell. Will be the lot. Of the many. Don't kid yourself. We must stand for the truth. And so we see.

We need a godly courage. Have courage. We need godly choices. By faith. Choose. God's way. Not Egypt. Choose the church. Choose the truth. Godly convictions. And lastly. What it takes. The school of hard knocks. Calls for. A godly cost.

[36 : 43] There's a cost to this school. If you want to live godly. It will cost you. It will cost you everything. That you have. Just to be found holding a Bible.

In some countries. Will cost you your life. Just to hold this book. It will cost you. To belong to this church.

We're talking about this church. God's church. Wherever it meant. It will cost you. To belong to this school. Of hard knocks. But always remember.

That while it costs dearly. To stand for right. The cost of yielding. To wrong. Is far greater. What a cost it would be. To neglect. There is a cost.

To the school of hard knocks. I put to you today. To be a disciple. The Lord Jesus. Didn't mince his words. When he said. It's going to cost you.

[37 : 45] Take up your cross. You have to be broken. You know. God loves. To use broken vessels. I know some of you. Have shared some brokenness.

With me. You're feeling broken. And I feel for you. It's hard for me. To put myself in your shoes. Some of you. Have been going through. Some really hard things.

Some people. Are going through hard things. And they don't even. They don't look like. They're going through hard things. But they're going through hard things. God knows. God knows. And here's what one preacher said.

God uses broken things. It takes broken soil. To produce a crop. Broken clouds. To produce rain. Broken grain.

To give bread. It's the broken alabaster box. That gives forth the perfume. It is Peter weeping bitterly. Who returns to greater power.

[38 : 43] Than ever. God uses. Broken things. Broken people. In Judges chapter 7. We find the victory of Gideon. His victory over the Midianites.

Gideon's army had been weakened. To just 300. Against thousands. Holding simple jars. Holding lights. And it was when the jars were broken.

And the light shone through. That victory was won. As these men simply broke the jars. And let the light shine. God wrought a victory.

Through broken things. God uses broken things. In Mark 16. Our Lord Jesus was dining. At the home of Simon. When a woman comes in. And gets this expensive container.

This expensive fragrant perfume. And she breaks it. And pours it out. And anoints the Lord Jesus. Jesus. God uses broken things.

[39 : 48] As we are broken. God can break through. And do a work. You know. It's said that a Christian. Is like a tea bag. It's not much good.

Until it has gone through. Hot water. Sometimes God puts us through. Hot water. To show. What we made of. There's an old time. Printer. Robert Murray McShane. Said this. There is a great want. About all Christians. Who have not suffered. Some flowers. Must be broken. Or bruised. Before they emit. Any fragrance. Maybe. Brokenness.

Has to happen. Don't be dissuaded. Don't be put off. Christian brother. Christian sister. You're in the school. We need some new students. To enrol.

In this school. Where does it start? It starts at the cross. It starts at the cross. The cross for Christ. Was the cross of shame.

[40 : 43] And likewise. He beckons you there. Me there. To the cross. To the cross. To carry the cross. Your cross. My cross. My cross. Are you crucified.

With Christ. Are you dead yet? Maybe he's got to knock. The stuffing out of us. A bit more. As it were.

The school of hard knocks. It costs for a dying to self. As we hand over. The reins of our life. Into his hands. That we. Can become. What he wants us to be.

John the Baptist. Knew the secret. Of spiritual strength. He says. He must increase. But I must decrease. Paul found the secret. As he was. Pleading for God.

To take the thorn. And God says. To Corinthians 12. 9. My grace. Is sufficient. For thee. For my strength.

[41 : 38] Is made perfect. In weakness. Paul says. Most gladly. Therefore. Will I. Rather glory. In my infirmities. That the power of Christ.

May rest upon me. It sounds. Kind of. Counterintuitive. Doesn't it? It sounds. Countercultural. It just doesn't. Compute. But I'd rather glory.

In my infirmities. That the power of Christ. May rest upon me. And so friends. Today. Troubled. On every side. But. Not distressed.

But not distressed. Paul says. The reason why. Is that the life of Jesus. Might be manifest. That's what it's about. And.

I'm simply. Encouraging you. This morning. To. Perceive. That. Whilst trouble comes. God hasn't forsaken you. Whilst trouble comes.

[42 : 36] And whilst. You're troubled. On every side. Yet not distressed. Perplexed. But not in despair.

There's a reason for it. Why? That the life of Jesus. Might be made manifest. In us. That Jesus will show through.

In your life. Even greater. Even brighter. And so. And so. We've come to a close. Of this message now.

I pray. I pray. That it's not just. A theoretical. Kind of. Lecture. About. Just.

Looking on the bright side. Of life. As it were. But that you can see. Through the lens. Of scripture. That though you are troubled.

[43 : 36] On every side. Yet. Yet. Not distressed. There's no need for you to be distressed. It's normal. And though you are perplexed.

Yet. You're not in despair. There's reason for it. That the life of Jesus. Might be. Made manifest. In your life.

And so friends. Have courage. Make godly choices. By faith. Choose the pathway. Of conviction. Not compromise. And take the cost.

As it were. Of the cross. And don't be deterred. Trouble will come. Much tribulation. Will come. For you. For me. For the church.

That's normal. It's normal. And so we should rather. Praise God. And trust him. Ever stronger.

[44 : 34] Through it all. Let's pray. Lord we thank you that. Whilst this world. Brings us trouble. We need not. Be distressed. Lord we can hold.

Fast. And we can be strong. Well. Whilst we're weak. You make us strong. That you will manifest yourself through us Lord.

So that when others see. The testing that we're going through. That will be even stronger for it. That the troubles. On every side.

On every side. Will not make us. Weaken. But strengthen us. That we'll have the discipline. And the fortitude.

That we'll have. The. Empowerment of your spirit. To get through. Whatever lies ahead. Help us Lord. To be the persecuted church.

[45 : 31] Knowing that we're persecuted. But not forsaken. And that you will never leave us. Nor forsake us. In Jesus name. Amen. Thank you.