



THE LORD'S FLOCK GROWTH DIGEST

PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES

"STRESS TEST"

(Pressure Series, Part 9)

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Stress Test is used to diagnose heart disease or irregular heart rhythm such as arrhythmia. This short-controlled test is done by medical professionals. St. Paul experienced different pressures in his mission (2 Cor. 4:7-10), but he knew God allowed all these for a good purpose, just like the medical stress tests. As Christians, we have faced challenges as God's workers. Consequently, we should accept these as God's tests in order to improve our spiritual wellbeing in relation to God as our ultimate source.

1. "Earthen Vessels" (2 Cor. 4:8-10) represent us because:

- 1.1 God has a special assignment for us.
- 1.2 He puts treasures in us.
- 1.3 He wants to use us.
- 1.4 We have a purpose to fulfill.
- 1.5 We have a role in God's plan.

2. We are vessels of God.

2.1 "If any one purifies himself from what is ignoble, then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work" (2 Tim. 2:21).

2.2 As Christians, our true treasure is God in us and He is more than our perishable earthly treasures and goals.

2.3 Moreover, we are set apart for God's work like Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2).

3. We face stress tests like earthen vessels.

3.1 St. Paul described his state of life as well as his followers like an earthen vessel facing dangerous pressures. These different pressures still hold true to all Christian workers today.

3.2 Our Christian life is fragile as a clay vessel and it can easily break if applied with pressure, and our

body will also deteriorate through time.

3.3 However, when God calls us to have a relationship with Him, He will make us strong and beautiful. Though these pressures will not be removed by God, we can face it through God's divine provisions.

3.4 St. Paul was hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted and struck down as he went to his mission (2 Cor. 4:8-10). Nevertheless, he saw these pressures as opportunities to reveal God's glory in his brokenness.

4. God is the treasure of our life.

4.1 St. Paul experienced painful and dangerous situations as a servant of Jesus, yet he continued to stand up and share the Gospel. The Lord raised and restored his strength! (Acts 14:19-22).

4.2 Like St. Paul, our Christian life is fueled by God's presence; He is our life-giving treasure. Our hope comes from the truth that our life here is temporary and our final reward is the entrance to His kingdom.

Conclusion:

St. Paul has exhorted Christian believers not to give up hope amidst the trials and sufferings due to service for God. God doesn't abandon (us) His sheep but rather He protects and nourishes us. He allows these tests to form our Christian character and, in the process, ingrain the values by our Christian example.

Reflection:

1. Why do you think God calls you to be His disciple?
2. How do you face your tests while serving the Lord?
3. What is your hope when facing all the trials in life?

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