

## I Will Survive – And Thrive!

1. Warm-up Question: Sunday’s sermon began with a story about one of our congregants, Niki Steveson, who was part of a famous Butler basketball team in 1996. Do you have a favorite sport or sports team? If so, what drew you to that sport or that particular team?
2. In 2020 Niki had a severe bout of double pneumonia triggered either by bronchitis or COVID. Her fever spiked, she couldn’t catch her breath, she coughed so hard she broke ribs, and every breath was so painful, she found herself consciously holding her breath. At one point, she was so weak, she was ready to give up, and told her spouse Amy she didn’t think she’d make it. Can you relate? When in your life have you felt most overwhelmed and defeated?
3. On Sunday we considered how we, as people of faith, should respond to adversity. We looked at three great spiritual principles that Jeff called “the Bible’s formula for conquering adversity.” **Principle # 1 – You are never alone – there’s another in the fire!** This principle is drawn from the classic Bible story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they refused to worship King Nebuchadnezzar’s golden idol and were throw into a fiery furnace. Daniel 3:23 says, “The three men fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counselors, ‘Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire . . . ? But I see four men, unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods!’”
  - a. Who do you think the fourth person in the fire was? What are the possibilities?
  - b. Jeff said, “There is a supernatural presence right there with you in every situation. Draw on that power. Expect that power to be manifest in your life. Live like you believe you’re never alone, and you won’t be.” To illustrate, he told of a woman named Lois Spoon who needed \$153.27 by a specific deadline. Shortly before the deadline, a casual acquaintance told Lois that she felt led to give her an envelope filled with money that, when counted, just happened to total \$153.27. Needless to say, Lois Spoon was blown away by such powerful evidence of God’s presence in her life. When in your life have you experienced the supernatural presence of God or known someone who did? What happened? How did that experience affect you?
  - c. Why is the conviction that there is a supernatural presence right there with us in every battle so important to our ability to thrive in times of crisis?
  - d. Suppose someone asked you, “Do you sense God’s presence with you?” What would you say? Suppose they followed up by asking how you know God is with you and what that feels like. How would you respond?
4. **Principle #2 – In the midst of adversity, keep pushing forward with ferocious determination – stubbornly refuse to yield.** Read James 1:2-12, as printed on p. 3.

- a. James 1:2-4 says, “My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and **let endurance have its full effect**, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.” How would you define “endurance”?
  - b. Do you think you have endurance? Explain your answer.
  - c. According to James, responding to our trials with endurance helps us become “mature, complete, and lacking in nothing.” What does that mean? How does someone who’s “mature, complete, and lacking in nothing” differ from other people? What sets them apart?
  - d. Given what we’ve discussed, why should we “consider it nothing but joy” when we face trials of any kind?
  - e. Winston Churchill said, “When you’re going through hell, don’t stop.” To illustrate the point, Jeff shared the rest of Niki Steveson’s story, telling how she made a conscious decision to fight her way back to health, enduring painful breathing treatments, then even returning to the basketball court and forcing herself back into shape when it felt like breathing broken glass into her lungs. And now she’s back! When have you witnessed someone show remarkable endurance? What did you learn from their example?
  - f. What’s the biggest trial you’re facing right now? Do you feel you are practicing endurance in that situation? Why or why not?
5. **Principle #3 – Cultivate a positive vision of the beauty that lies on the other side of your hardship – both in this life and the next.**
- a. Romans 8:28 says, “All things work together for good for those who love God.” In other words, when we faithfully endure hardship, we often find great beauty on the other side. When in has hardship led you to something beautiful in your life?
  - b. As we’ve already seen, James 1:2 says, “The testing of your faith produces endurance, and [when] endurance [has] its full effect, [you will be] mature and complete, lacking in nothing.” The idea here is that trials shape and equip our souls not just for this life, but for eternity. Think back to the trial you identified in response to Question 4.f. above. How might enduring that trial strengthen and enhance your soul for all eternity? What values might be strengthened with you? What lessons might you carry with you from it?

***Remember, when you’re walking through hell, don’t stop!  
We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Philippians 4:13.***

## **James 1:2-8, 12**

<sup>2</sup>My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

<sup>5</sup>If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. <sup>6</sup>But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup>That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. <sup>8</sup>Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

<sup>12</sup>Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love God.