

COUNT IT ALL JOY

by Geri McGhee



In August (1987) as I was seeking the Lord for a word to teach my Bible Study Group, the Lord gave me this Scripture found in James 1:21, *"Count it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials."* In the Phillips translation it says, "When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders but welcome them as friends." When God gives me a message, He usually begins by giving me a Scripture on a subject that I know little or nothing about. Then as I study the Scripture, He unfolds His message. This day was no exception. I said, *"But, Lord, how can I teach others to count it all joy when I, myself, do not know how to count it all joy?"* The Lord responded by telling me that these messages would be "especially for me." What I thought was to be only one message turned out to be a series of 12 Bible studies on suffering. I now see they were preparing me for what was to come.

Little did I know in September of the following year (1988), my youngest son, Todd would be diagnosed with having AIDS. I had been praying for him for 20 years that God would do whatever He needed to do to save his soul and deliver him from homosexuality. God strengthen my heart and faith through the months that followed as He taught me that I could "COUNT IT ALL JOY" KNOWING that this great testing was producing endurance in me. He taught me that this momentary light affliction was producing for Todd, my husband, and I, a *far greater weight in glory, and for me not to look on the things which are seen, but the things which are unseen.* For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal. I learned, *"All things are for our sake that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God."* That is, it was working for our good to conform us to the image of Jesus (Romans 8:28-30).

Because of this, God did not let me lose heart (*faint, give up or despair*). Even though I saw before my very eyes, Todd's outer man decaying (*which is literally what happens to a person dying of AIDS*), I saw his inner man being renewed day by day. Over the next months, outwardly, I saw him grow weaker and weaker in his body but the person inside his emaciated body (Todd) grew stronger and stronger. God says that we have need of endurance (Hebrews 10:36). Why do we need endurance? Because His Word says that it is *those who endure and persevere to the end that will be saved.* The Word says that by our endurance *we will gain our lives and after we have done the will of God, we will receive what has been promised (salvation).*

God taught me that trials (*our circumstances*) are the proving or testing of our faith, virtue, character and constancy by enticements to sin, and that His testings are His crucible (*refining pot or furnace*) to test the quality of our lives. Proverbs says, *"The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests hearts."* When a silver smith refines silver to purify it, he melts it by heating it in a crucible or refining pot. The dross (*impurities*) collects on the top. He then skims off the dross and repeats this process of heating and melting usually 7 times until he can see a clear reflection of his face in the silver indicating the silver has been purified. John said of Jesus in Matthew 3:11 *"But He who is coming after me is mightier than I. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and FIRE."* The fire he mentioned is a refiner's fire. That is why we are admonished in I Peter 4:12 to *not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among us which comes upon us for our testing and not think some strange thing is happening to us.* Each person who names the name of Christ is going through his or her own kind of fire. These fires of adversity are for our good so that we can be refined and be sanctified vessels sharing in His holiness.

The fire will do one of two things: Either cut a person off from God because he will not release his sin (*the dross of his life*) proving that he is chaff, which the fire will ultimately destroy, or it will purify a person. The Bible says in Hebrews 12 that without sanctification (*holiness and purification*) no man will see God. That is why we are told in I Corinthians 3 that everything fleshly will be burned up and if we truly have salvation it will be because we survived God's purifying fires of adversity. Job said, *"When I am tried, I shall come forth as gold."* Jesus said in Matthew *"The righteous will shine forth as the sun. in the kingdom of their Father."* Malachi 3:2-3, speaking of Jesus says, *"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap and He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi (you and I) and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness."*

Hebrews 12 says God disciplines us that we might share in His holiness. If we do not let His discipline increase our virtue as it is intended to do, yielding the peaceful fruit of righteousness in our lives then we are illegitimate sons (*not really His*). What we do in the midst of trials will prove what we are made of and who we belong to. When a true child of God goes through a trial he will become "better" because he will humble himself by yielding to the Spirit of Grace (*His Lordship*). He will go to God's Throne of Grace *to receive mercy in time of need, which will perfect, confirm, establish and strengthen him.* An illegitimate son will become "bitter" by refusing to go to the Throne of Grace through humbling himself under His Lordship. Instead, he will *faint and come short of the grace of God receiving a root of bitterness (whereby many will be defiled).*

Jeremiah 6:29 describes an illegitimate (*false*) son. *"The bellows blow fiercely, the lead is consumed by the fire; in vain the refining goes on but the wicked are not separated. They call them rejected silver because the Lord has rejected them."* He rejected them because they refused to let go of the dross (*sin*) of their lives. These were people who wanted God on the one hand but on the other hand, they loved their sin more than they loved God. This is a picture of the "so-called" Church today, LUKEWARM.

Isaiah 26:9-10 says *"When the earth (a true son) experiences Thy judgments, the inhabitants of the world (true sons) learn righteousness. Though the wicked (an illegitimate or false son) is shown favor, he DOES NOT LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS. He deals unjustly in the land of the upright and does not perceive the majesty of the Lord."* I had learned over this past two years that the trials and testing I have gone through are God's means of making me that holy, righteous Bride of Christ and that MY TRIALS AND TESTINGS ARE A FRIEND, and not a dreaded enemy (*INTRUDER*).

By August 1, 1989, Todd's disease had progressed to the point of near death. He had Kaposi's sarcoma lesions (*cancer of the small blood vessels*), had gone blind in his left eye, could not keep down food without vomiting it up, had to wear diapers because he could not control bowel movements, had Candida lesions and Kaposi's Sarcoma tumors in his mouth and intestines, had neuropathy in his feet which made them too sensitive to touch making it difficult to walk and even rest at night. He would have to sleep with his feet uncovered. His body was malnourished with about every deficiency that he could have (*protein, potassium, anemia, etc.*). He was losing his hair and was too weak to walk or get up by himself. He had a persistent cough and a rattle in his chest. Under his right arm an enlarged lymph gland the size of an egg erupted. Also on the same arm 8-10 boil-like rotting sores erupted. He had herpes lesions around his rectum and his feet had swollen to size 13 from a size 10 1/2 shoe. Judgment was on everything he had ever sinned with. Yet, when he turned to the Lord with his whole heart, God lavished His grace upon him to the point that he asked me one day, *"Mom, do you think when I die, I will have to suffer?"* We had already seen him suffer so much but because of so much of God's grace upon him, he really was not aware of just how much he really had suffered. In April, since there was no cure for AIDS and because of near fatal side effects from medications, he decided to trust his body completely to the Lord. He quit using a doctor even though he had been warned that untreated AIDS was "not a pretty sight." He also discontinued all medications. He put his life and his body completely in the hands of the Lord. He was unbelievably brave and he never once complained. A few days before Todd died, I had been encouraged to get him morphine for pain because I had been told that people with AIDS die such a tormented and painful death that even with morphine some have to be strapped to the bed. The day before he died I ask, *"Todd, does anything hurt you?"* and he answered, *"No mom."* I never gave him anything for pain. I also had been told that AIDS victims

because of brain rot go mad or get mean and vicious. Todd just got sweeter and sweeter. My precious baby son died at home on August 25, 1989 just 3 days after his 25th birthday. God had totally delivered him from homosexuality. He died with the peace of God ruling in his heart, free of pain and torment and with the mind of Christ; instead of the depraved mind that God sends on all those who refuse to repent of their sin (Romans 1 :28). Ecclesiastes 11: 10 says, *"So, remove vexation (grief, anger, hurt, provocation, idolatry) from your heart and put away pain from your body..."*

Todd said that had it not been for AIDS, he would have progressed in his sin. He said that this disease brought him to Jesus. His favorite verse was *"Before I was afflicted, I went astray, it was good that I have been afflicted for now I keep His Word."* (Psalms 119:67,71). One day Linda, the angel God had sent to help us and to lay down her life for Todd and I, asked Todd, *"If you could have any one thing right now, what would it be?"* He could have replied *"healing,"* but his comment was, *"Salvation is enough!"*

But how has all this been used for ***my*** purification? How have ***I*** benefitted from all this? God has shown me so much pride and selfishness in my own life. Also, that I don't know as much as I thought about anything as I once thought I did. He has worked in me a greater sensitivity to the needs of people and along with that, given me a greater desire to lay down my life for others. I have seen that some things I thought were so important are not important at all. He has caused my focus to be more on the eternal rather than the temporal. He has put a burden on my heart for little boys and for young men trapped in this sin. Not only to rescue them from homosexuality, but to do what I can to keep them from the destruction of the lifestyle which destroyed my son physically. In the past, it has been really hard for me to cry. I am now more able to mourn with those who mourn and weep with those who weep. Everything in my life has been reduced to an even greater degree and urgency of wanting to please God, live for Him and serve Him every minute of my life for the rest of my life. Through this great trial, He is removing a wrong focus on temporal things and replacing them with a greater desire for eternal things. The prayer I have prayed for years to be a reality in my own life and experience is now closer to being fulfilled, *"For me to live is Christ and die is gain."*

Even though I miss my son so very much and there is a big empty place left in my heart, I can praise the Lord for AIDS because I know that this disease was God's mercy to save Todd's soul from eternal damnation (*which I could not bear*). If there could have been another way, God in His great mercy would have done it another way. I am confident that there will be greater honor and glory to the Lord through Todd's death because he prayed for God NOT to let him live UNLESS God would get greater honor that way. This is already becoming a reality through his testimony,

"Todd's Greatest Regret". And, yes, I can and *do* "Count It All Joy." "Weeping may go on for the night (or nights) but - JOY comes in the morning."

If you looked at my life from the natural, you would probably say, "Undoubtedly, this is the worst year of her life," but I can honestly say, with all my heart, because of God's wonderful grace and His closeness to me and because my little lost sheep is now with Jesus, **"THIS HAS BEEN THE BEST, MOST WONDERFUL AND FRUITFUL YEAR OF MY LIFE."**

I felt the Lord telling me in June (1982) that Todd would be saved in 7 years and serving the Lord by his 25th birthday August 1989 (which he was.) I had always believed that Todd would be preaching the gospel and assumed if that was so, he would be alive to do it. God chose to let Todd preach another way through his testimony which has been made into an hour television special entitled, **"Todd's Greatest Regret"**. It has been and is being aired in many places on Christian Television (*Houston, Galveston, Beaumont, North Carolina, Pennsylvania [Keystone networks,] New Mexico, New York, Louisiana, El Paso and in Alabama*). It has been put in 33 prisons, shown in churches, schools and in homes. We are getting word from many states as to the impact his testimony is making on lives. On October 19, 1989, it was shown in Huntsville Penitentiary where 25 homosexuals gave their hearts to Jesus and went forward for deliverance from homosexuality. (*Note: as of today's date January 31, 2011, almost 23 years since his death, Todd's Testimony is still being aired in Tyler, TX and on a few stations over the country.*)

To view **"Todd's Greatest Regret,"** please follow this link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2kqisUzkyw>

On the top of the video,
please note that there are four videos
(4 x 15 minute segments) to view.



To order CD of Todd's Greatest Regret", for upcoming seminars, more messages on the "overcoming life", to donate online, or to order CD's/Cassettes with deliverance prayers, visit us online at <http://www.abidinglifeministries.org>

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