

1 Cor. 4 - The Message Bible – “It seems to me that God has put us who bear this message on a stage in a theatre in which nobody wants to buy a ticket. We’re something that everyone stands around and stares at, like an accident in the street. We’re the Messiah’s misfits. You might be sure of yourselves, but we live in the midst of frailties and uncertainties. You might be well thought of by others, but we’re mostly kicked around. Much of the time we don’t have enough to eat, we wear patched and threadbare clothes, we get doors slammed in our faces, and we pick up odd jobs anywhere we can eke out a living. When they call us names, we say, “God bless you.” When they spread rumors about us, we put in a good word for them. We’re treated like garbage, potato peelings from the cultures kitchen.”

Rev. 3:19 Amp “Those whom I [dearly and tenderly] love, I tell their faults and convict and convince and reprove and chasten [I discipline and instruct them]. So be enthusiastic and in earnest and burning with zeal and repent [changing your mind and attitude].”

I used to simply tolerate the “super faith” people who felt that it was a lack of faith in God to display any form of weakness when in the midst of a trial. Now I feel sorry for them. Anyone who is always “high” either has not submitted to the hand of God for training, or is a liar.

In the above verse, John is calling those going through the rigors of training and chastening to be enthusiastic. So many immature believers feel that to have real faith, one must always carry a presence of sweetness and joy, never expressing the reality of the hurt that accompanies growth. In our walk, the Lord over and over brings us to the limit of our ability to tolerate the pressure. At that time, inner joy of God’s love may be present, but outwardly, if we were honest, we would have the freedom to say “ouch.”

There is a great difference between a self-serving attitude of whining and complaining and a warlike countenance when our flesh is being destroyed. Under His hand, during the time of pressure we may squirm, squeal, and hurt. The trial shows our weakness, but by our submission, He grows us stronger, ready for the next limit of our endurance. The next trial always has higher limits because we have grown.

The enthusiasm that John is speaking about should not be confused with enjoying the pain. We are enthusiastic because we have a loving God who cares enough for us to continually take on the responsibility of eliminating our weakness. Jesus Himself endured, tolerated, and hurt on the cross for a future joy. He wasn’t smiling in the garden or on the cross. Only at the resurrection was His joy complete. Before that He was real and hurting, but in His pain He was still full of faith and supremely confident in what His Father was doing.

Willing to say “ouch,” but remembering the love – Jim Corbett