

Steadfastness: Never Waste Our Pain  
7th in a series of 7

Video Clip: (in worship PP) with Audio

Welcome to Timberline Church and thanks for joining us this morning for this time of worship. If it looks a bit empty... there are 25 couples at the Marriage Retreat at Ocean City Maryland this morning... and we hope they are having a wonderful time! This is the last week of the series, 'How to get through what we're going through' and we have been blessed to hear story after story of Gods' faithfulness in the midst of tragedy and loss.

Interview: This morning we are going to hear from Don & Cheryl Kercher. As you saw on the video, the Garden Spot Bowling Center in Strasburg, owned by the Kercher's, burned to the ground on Wednesday evening May 4, 2011, after being battled by several hundred firemen from 12-14 local Fire Company's.

This was a huge loss, not only to the Kercher's... but to the community as well, since Garden Spot Bowling Center had been a borough landmark for more than 50 years.

It was determined that the fire started in the attic and had most likely been burning for several hours before burning embers eventually dropped down on the bowling lanes. Two lanes remained undamaged after the fire; in fact, Don & Cheryl, I understand the pins were still in position on those lanes, looking like you were open and ready for business. Here is one of the balls and one of the pins that survived the fire. You told me that there were approximately 12-15 bowlers still in the building when the fire was discovered and 30 minutes earlier... there were some 60 people wrapping up an evening league.

Cheryl, you made sure everyone exited safely, grabbed your car keys, never even thought about taking the cash drawer with you and just like the captain of a sinking ship...you were the last one out the door and 15 minutes later the roof collapsed.

Cheryl:

- What thoughts were running through your head as you ran out of this burning building that had provided such joy to you and so many other people over the years?

Don:

- You had left the Bowling Center when the league was finished and you were on your way home when you got the call from Cheryl that it was on fire. What did you think at the time and what did you do next?

Cheryl:

- As we all know it was 'only a building' and no lives were lost... but yet... it was an incredible blow to you... why... tell us about that?

Don:

- For months your sign out front notoriously read... 'Delay by Insurance', what was that all about?
- How did God eventually come into play in the process?

Cheryl:

- In between the fire and the settlement you both took the Dave Ramsey course... how did that impact you.

- What did you learn about trusting God through all of this? (Never doubt, God will not leave you nor forsake you)

Don:

Two months after the fire... your dog died. Four months after the fire your best friend died and then 15 days after settlement you ended up in the ER with what they thought was a heart attack. You started this journey thinking you needed to take care of things yourself... and after hiring an adjuster and then 3 attorneys later...

- What did you learn about God through all of this? (Consider God in every part of your life)

I find it interesting that Cheryl showed up in my office yesterday with this book called, 'Jesus Calling' by Sarah young. This is now the third interview where this book has surfaced... so TL... think about this!

Cheryl pointed out two pages that put this whole experience in perspective... and so we made copies of them to advertize the book... and the ushers will be distributing them during the offering.

Prayer for them on their Journey:

Slide #3 Man of Steel: Audio Clip - Sword comes in

As a young boy he learns that he has extraordinary powers and is not of this Earth. As a young man, he journeys to discover where he came from and what he was sent here to do. But the hero in him must emerge if he is to save the world from annihilation and become the symbol of hope for all mankind.

Whether it is the Man of Steel waging war on Lex Luther or the Kercher's battling the insurance company... there is always a war going on!

Satan beat up on Cheryl as the insurance war drug on... making her feel like maybe she hadn't done things right, or hadn't done enough for God or maybe God was punishing her... by allowing the fire to happen. Don on the other hand, after the fire, was suckered into thinking that he could work this out himself... and the battle intensified. But God has blessed Don and Cheryl since that time and showed himself to them and brought everything to settlement... but there is always a battle going on!

Slide #4 Series Title:

Well folks... this is it! This is the last week of this series! Satan makes us go through what we are going through because he hates us... and since we will always be at war... we want to end this morning with a message that will challenge us to never waste the experiences of what we are going through.

Slide #5 TL Clarian Call:

1. Receiving God's love.
2. Rebuilding relationships.
3. Restoring the world.

We keep putting this challenge before you because it summarizes what God has called TL to do. It defines our focus, our vision, our worship, our programming and our facility... and if you have been around TL for a while... this is familiar to you.

But what you may not be aware of is that God uses the losses and pain in our lives, regardless of how big or small they are, to fulfill this TL Clarian Call. Unfortunately many of us never connect the

dots between our pain and our calling and we end up wasting our suffering... and we are going to talk about that this morning.

Slide #6 Rick Warren says it this way...Most people waste their pain. Most people don't profit from their problems. They don't harvest their hurts. They don't advance from their adversity. Most people don't learn from their losses, they don't improve from their injuries. Most people never gain from their pain.

The title of the message this morning is...

Slide #7 Steadfastness: Never waste our pain!

What can we gain from our pain? God wants to use whatever pain we are going through... whether it be emotional, physical, financial, relational or spiritual... to work out our TL Clarian Call... and he doesn't want us to waste a drop of it!

Slide #8 Galatians 3:4 Have you suffered so much for nothing — if it really was for nothing?

The Christians at Galatia had suffered for the Gospel and some legalistic teachers were trying to convince them it was for nothing... because they weren't following the Jewish laws. Paul was on a warpath against these legalistic hypocrites... and he was teaching them about salvation by grace and he was saying... come on guys... you didn't get through what you're going through for nothing! There was a purpose in all of this!

So I want to ask you this morning... don't raise your hands...but how about you... are you growing from your pain... from your problems... from your losses... or have you wasted them. Are you further down the road to where God wants to take you... or are you just more scarred up.... with nothing to show for it?

Let's go our notes.

Slide #9 We can gain from our pain by...

1. Using our pain to receive God's love and draw closer to Him.

We can use our pain to draw closer to God. When anything bad happens in our lives... we have a choice to make... we can either run to God or we can run away from God.

It seems like we by nature instinctively turn to God in times of pain. Whenever there is a massive tragedy like 911, Sandy Hook, the Indian Ocean Tsunami or Hurricane Katrina... our first reaction is to call out to God... people just do... because we know by instinct that we should turn to God. Remember what Gordy Eby said when the doctor called late at night and said it is cancer of the brain... he fell to his knees and cried out to God.

What have we learned over the weeks? How do we draw close to God in our pain and receive his love?

Slide #10 Let's review: In our Shock we learn the value of crying out to God. In our Sorrow we find that we can't go over it, under it or around it... we must go through it. In our Struggle with God we discover how to lament and complain to God in a healthy way. In our Surrender we allow grief to develop us. In our Sanctification we are transformed by trouble. In our Search we find treasures in the darkness. Why? Because every one of these steps draws us closer to God...rather than away from God.

Slide #11 1 Peter 4:12-14 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Slide #12 Prayer & Reflection: (I-Pod SS)

Pain is often a great motivator to draw us to God. It is often what drives us to prayer. I want to invite you right now into a time of prayer and reflection. Let's listen to what God may be saying to us about our pain.

Slide #13 We can gain from our pain by...

2. Using our pain to rebuild relationships.

All of us are going to suffer because we live in a broken world. All of us are going to experience pain because no one lives a pain free life. So if we are going to suffer... we might as well use it... by helping others that are experiencing pain.

I can't always directly identify with the interviews that we have had over this series... like tragic accidents, an overdose, cancer or a devastating fire... this is why I invited these folks to come along side of me and help me preach these messages...but I can identify with pain... particularly the pain of betrayal. Some of the most painful moments in my life have come from individuals that I have treasured, that I have trusted, that I have invested in, that I have confided in... only to find that when the hard times came... they walked right out of my life and stabbed me in the back on their way out the door.

Years ago I was asked by woman who had been unfaithful to her husband to be there when she finally admitted to him that she had an affair. It was a tough conversation and I remember the disbelief on his part and the embarrassment on hers. But I was able to walk with him through his feelings of betrayal... because I know the feelings of betrayal. Another time I confronted a husband who had molested several children and together we watched his wife fall apart because of his betrayal! It was a horrible, painful experience that I will never forget...the gasp, the sobbing, the pain... but I was able to be there and could at least in part feel her pain...because I know betrayal.

I have been deeply wounded in the past, in the church, but I have a choice to make. I can focus on my feelings... how bad it felt... or I can refocus it and be there for others in their pain.

Slide #14 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

This is common sense 101. Who can better help a struggling teacher than an experienced teacher? Who could better help parents of a special needs child than somebody who is a parent of a special needs child? Who can better help somebody struggling with a chronic illness than somebody who is struggling with a chronic illness?

Who could better help someone who has been betrayed than someone who has been betrayed! It's just common sense 101.

Let's not waste our hurt.

Slide #15 We can gain from our pain by...

3. Using our pain to restore the world.

The world is not necessarily impressed with how we handle prosperity or success... but the world can be impressed with how we handle adversity. We tend to think that our successes give us credibility.

We tend to think that our fame earns respect. We tend to think that high profile Christian people that are highly gifted have an edge when it comes to sharing the gospel and serving others. But the fact is... faithfulness in tough times is the most effective way to reach out and restore the world.

When Aimee and Rita Venuto and Amy Gordon say... I believe in God... after the loss of their beloved Robert in a tragic accident... people will listen. When the Fisher's proclaim to trust God after finding out that their son Justin overdosed... people will give them an ear.

When Wendy Eby says... 'I have peace' even though the Doctors have told her she has a 50% chance... people will hear her. When John and Linda Day tell their story of their battle with breast cancer... they have credibility. When Denise Miller is able to say 'I forgave the guy who crossed the lane and killed my daughter', others will listen to her story. Last week when Jim told his story about his loss of job and his loss of ministry, there were some of us here that morning that could identify with him. When Cheryl Kercher said, 'Never doubt God because he won't leave you or forsake you', she has earned the right to make that comment.

Our weaknesses will actually gain a hearing more than our strengths and this is a counter cultural idea. It flies in the face of popular Christianity. We don't need to be rich or famous to be heard as a Christian... we just need to be authentic in our pain and loss.

And when we are authentic in pain... people will listen to us more than any program or initiative... because pain humanizes, pain sympathizes, and pain causes us to have credibility with people.

So I can use my pain to witness to people and serve the world. One of the best stories in the Bible about pain impacting the gospel comes to us from the apostle Paul.

Slide #16 Philippians 1:12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

Paul wrote these words in prison, most likely near the end of his life. And as he reflects back on his life and what landed him in prison, he recognizes that all of the pain he had experienced had actually advanced the Gospel and restored the world around him.

What might have been running through his mind? We don't know for sure but this is what he wrote about 6 years earlier.

Slide # 17 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.

Slide #18 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move.

Slide #19 I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.

Slide #20 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

And how many times this week have we heard someone say... I'm having a bad day... or that's not fair!

The bottom line is this. We are going to have pain in our lives and we wish we could stop it... but we can't... so we can either use it for good or waste it!

I want you to listen very closely to what I'm about to say. I want you to win in life. I want you to succeed in life. I want your life to have meaning and significance. I want your life to be all that God wants it to be.

But I want you to know that the secret of every winner... whether it's winning in business, winning in sports, winning in love, winning in relationships, winning financially, winning spiritually or any other way... the secret of every single winner is one word: 'Steadfastness'. It's the ability to stand fast and not back down. It's the determination and commitment to not give up. This is the reason we have called this message: Steadfastness: Never Waste Our Pain.

Winners keep going. Winners get knocked down but they get back up. Winners have the same problems losers do but they persist with steadfastness.

So how do we do this? How do we allow our pain to produce steadfastness?

Slide #21 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

This is our TL Bible Memory Challenge. We must look beyond what we see... to the unseen! These painful times are achieving for us an eternal glory far greater than any pain free comfort will ever give us and inwardly we are being renewed daily.

Slide #22 Rick Warren calls this 'Purpose Driven Pain'. We can endure unbelievable pain... if there is purpose in it. If we don't see a purpose in it... we're not going to be steadfast. But if we can see a purpose in it and if we see God's hand in it... and if God is using this to draw me closer to himself... we can be steadfast.

This series has been an incredible challenge to me and one of the things that I underestimated... was the power of the stories. Initially I thought I would just send out some questions ahead of time so they could be prepared for Sunday. The week before we began this series... I thought... maybe I should meet with them before hand... and I did... and I am so glad I did. The time I spent with everyone... the Saturday before... was such a blessing! We generally talked for several hours... and each week I wished I could turn the interview into an hour... there was so much to say... so much to learn....

Invite Prayer Team Up:

Benediction:

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;  
Come and see what the Lord has done,

The Lord Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress.  
Be Steadfast!