



On an August day thirty-five years ago, my friend and I set out on a catamaran for a quiet float on a lake. Within 20 minutes of our departure, we noticed ominous clouds forming above us. The light breeze turned into a strong wind and the catamaran took off at high speed.

At first, it was exhilarating, but then the catamaran flipped over, catapulting both of us through the air. The mast was submerged, and we were bobbing helplessly in the waves. When we set the catamaran back on its pontoons, the sail immediately filled with wind and the boat took off at a furious pace with neither of us on board! My friend grabbed the tow rope, and I grabbed him!

My friend looked at me with wide-eye terror and yelled, “HANG ON!” I climbed onto the catamaran, lowered the sail, dropped the anchor, and helped my friend on board. It was a wild ride!

In March of 2020, none of us realized that the ominous clouds of a pandemic would send our world into chaos. For many of us it has been exhausting trying to manage expectations, deal with loss, navigate tensions, and embrace opportunities.

One theme that continues to emerge in my conversations is grief over accumulated losses. We have no idea the extent of the emotional, relational, and mental health issues that will emerge from the trauma of the pandemic. The next several months could be our most challenging. The question is, “How do we hold on?” What is the key to resilience when the winds are strong, tensions are high, and the future is uncertain?

Jason Gore suggested that “Resiliency is not just the acceptance of a situation, but rather, an expectation to persevere through with steadiness and come out better on the other side.”<sup>1</sup> It is not passive acceptance but rather a hope-filled expectation of transformation.

Jeremiah is an incredible example of resiliency in trauma. He prophesied to the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom (Judah and Benjamin) and his message was one of impending doom. God gave Jeremiah a powerful call, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew (chose) you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1: 5). How could Jeremiah not succeed?

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Gore, Hope Community Church, sermon, When Storms Hit: <https://vimeo.com/561671152>

However, over five decades he had no fruit to show for his labour. Not one person obeyed; no one repented; no one followed his prophecies. He was hated, ridiculed, and shamed. In Jeremiah 20, after being beaten with 39 lashes and put in stocks overnight, Jeremiah hit a low point—he was ready to give up, devastated because he thought that God would protect him. Jeremiah’s experience in this moment reveals the key to resiliency.

First, resilience is rooted in unbridled honesty. Jeremiah cries out, “You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed, I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me. (20:7).” David Guzik states, “True life transformation comes when you bring the REAL you to the REAL Jesus!”<sup>2</sup> A wave of deep discouragement overwhelmed Jeremiah, but he did not hide his current reality! Often Christian stoicism wraps emotional denial in religious platitudes, eroding intimacy with God and undermining the foundation of resilience.

Rick Ezell encourages us that, “If you feel anger towards God you should tell him. God is big enough and strong enough to handle your hurt and anger. So, tell him about it. He wants you to pour out your heart to him. By pouring out these emotions we are freed from their hold, and we enter more deeply into the loving embrace of the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

Second, resilience is rekindled in the fire of the call. Jeremiah declares, “But if I say, ‘I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot (20:9).” This is

<sup>2</sup> David Guzik, sermon, Jeremiah 20 - I can not NOT: <https://youtu.be/NNLA04dFTP8>

<sup>3</sup> Rick Ezell, sermon, Rise Above Discouragement, Jeremiah 20: <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/sermon-rise-above-discouragement-jeremiah-20>

Jeremiah’s resignation letter to God. I am out, finished, retired, done, it is over! But as he was walking out of his prophetic office, an inward flame burned so fiercely that he could not find relief! Paul wrote to Timothy, “For this reason, I remind you to FAN INTO FLAME the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit of God gave us power, love, and self-discipline. . . so do not be ashamed about our Lord (2 Timothy 1:6-8).” Be still and listen. Hear the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit—be consumed by fresh fire!

Finally, resilience is renewed in the presence of our warrior God. Jeremiah affirms, “But the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior, so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail! . . . Sing to the Lord! Give praise to the Lord! He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked (20: 11-13).” Jeremiah shifts his gaze from deep discouragement to the One who promised to rescue him!

God does not promise a pain free life. God did not remove Jeremiah from his challenging circumstances, but He did bring him through them! That is why Jeremiah could declare, “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness! (Lamentations 3:22-23).” The winds are strong, tensions are high, and the future is uncertain, but this is a call to resilience; to shift your gaze to the One who has promised to be with you like a mighty warrior.

The fire of your call is still burning and the One who reigns and rules over all of creation stands with you—so HOLD ON!

## Global Advance Fund Update

The Global Advance Fund (GAF) covers the costs of sending and supporting international workers. Through the GAF, our workers take the Gospel to places where few or none have heard the name of Jesus.

**Year to date** (as of August 27, 2021)

Total 2021 Faith Goal	\$14,322,910*
YTD Income	\$8,827,006)
Excess/Shortfall	(5,495,904

\*61.63% of total 2021 Faith Goal



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