



Official Newsletter

The Voice of the Spirit

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## CRISIS AS A WAY OF EXPERIENCING A DEEPER GRACE FROM GOD

Rev. Joel A. Tejado

*"We are troubled in every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsake; cast down, but not destroyed..." (2 Cor. 4:8-9).*

*"From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another..." (John 1:16).*

**C**hinese proverbs defines crisis as an "opportunity" rather than a "curse." When crisis comes we feel sometimes we might be abandoned by God. Crisis is a time when our circumstances are unpredictable. We are not sure if we can survive or not. But for us Christians, crisis is an "opportunity" to experience the greatness of God in our lives. Just like the Prodigal Son when he was at his "lowest condition" he regained his spiritual senses and experienced the greatness of his father. Crisis sometimes is a time of rethinking and reorienting our lives in the center of God's will. These are the things I experienced after coming from tremendous trials in life. Let me tell you my story.



It was in the early morning of Friday, April 9, 2009, when my family and I decided to spend several days of vacation in my hometown. Since this was our first time after ten years to be together as family, I felt it was necessary to bring my wife and my children to be with

me when I spoke at the Easter Sunday service of the Assemblies of God churches in Roxas, Isabela. And so I decided to drive my jeep with the intention to bring my younger brother and his family with me. While it was tough and stressful work to drive the whole day, there was so much fun in travelling the beautiful mountains of Dalton Pass in Nueva Viscaya and Diadi Isabela. It was even much more fun when we reached our village and introduced my children to my mother and brothers and sisters. That Saturday was much fun to all of us, bringing much joy for my family and me to visit our relatives and eat our lunch at the river. The three days vacation was a busy time for all of us. My eldest sister was so much relieved by our visit that she brought us to the hotel for one night before I spoke to the Pentecostal gathering. I was motivated to speak well because the mayor of Roxas intended to attend the gathering. I felt pressured, however, because of the big banner in the auditorium stating “Rev. Joel A. Tejedo” as the featured speaker.



During the service, I took the opportunity to encourage Christian churches to unite. I based my sermon on Psalms 133, exhorting the churches that if they would foster collective solidarity, that solidarity would command something “pleasant,” that it would bring “empowerment” and even “blessings” to the town of Roxas. I realized later that my message was timely because of the growing “concern” Christian leaders had with the political problems the Mayor was facing. I sensed also that there was so much blessing whenever the people of God gather for worship and prayer. During that Sunday evening, we gathered again for the second time to worship and fellowship. The Municipal Mayor expressed so much appreciation after Christian leaders prayed for him.



A day after the gathering, we travelled back to Pangasinan. But this time we experienced a lot of mechanical problems that caused us to be stranded along the road for one day before we were able to reach the house. It was really a crisis! I thought I was okay. But three days after I came back from Isabel, I was not able to breathe and experienced constant sweating. So I was rushed to Sacred Heart Hospital in Urdaneta City. The doctor discovered that I suffered inflammation of the ribs (chostoconritis). Due to stress and too much fatigue, I felt tremendous pain in my body that made me unable to breathe. Three days after coming out of the hospitals I was rushed again to the same hospital and stayed another four days for treatment. The extreme heat of the sun worsened my condition that week. It was a tremendous experience. I was not sure if I would still live or not. Because of this, my wife decided to bring me up to Baguio Medical Center (BMC) for a re-evaluation. We were concerned that there might have been another cause of my illness and for the failure of my medication not working. At BMC, they discovered that I had a series of heart attacks. This made me stay another week in the hospital. I felt as though I had lost my hope to live. During those times that I could not move and felt a constant pain in my body. I was not sure at that time if I would survive or not. It was a tough crisis and almost unbearable.

Nevertheless, regardless of the pain and illness I experienced, comfort came in so many ways. This is what I call a "deeper grace" from God. With many Christian workers, pastors, and Christian leaders who came and prayed for me, I felt refreshed and assured that God was always with me, carrying me under his wings. My members, after knowing that I was in the hospitals, collectively brought a special offering and rushed to the hospital to visit me. Pastor Lito Sacatropiz, my associate pastor, helped me to fulfil my ministry to the church and to the children at Verna Linzey Child Care Ministry International. Our ministry to the church was not stopped. Rather, it continued with great zeal. Our sectional presbyter, Rev. Mario Ferrer, never stopped texting my fellow pastors to pray for my healing. Then after three days, he directed two staff members from our section to visit and helped me pay my bills in the hospital. I was deeply thankful for Pastor Lumahan, our district superintendent, sacrificing his honorarium from the district and praying for my recovery. My student from Australia and fellow workers in Asia Bible College and Luzon Bible College, after hearing that I was in the hospital, came and offered me encouragement and prayers. Other pastors and leaders from another district, like Rev. Dominador Lopez, Rev. Marrio Ferrer, Rev. Wilson Ritual and Sis. Lholly Bugtong were worried about my condition. I sent messages to the fellow pastors in Benguet to pray for me. Rev. and Mrs Benny Domingo, all the way from Laoag City, came to Baguio City to visit and gave an offering. Much more, special thanks are due to the prayers of my overseas friends like Dr. Verna Linzey and Dr. Jim Linzey in the United States, and Carolyn Leng from Malaysia, who constantly prayed for my well-being.

After I came out of from the hospital, Carolyn's uncle took us to their house in Itogon and allowed us to stay and rest for a while far from busy schedule. Their house is located at the top of the mountain with many fruit trees. Uncle Sam is a God-fearing member of an AG church. For one month, he led regular devotions and worship that gave me enough spiritual strength to recover. While I was recovering, I had the opportunity to see the condition of many poor miners from Benguet Mining Corporation who are living below the poverty line. Many children are extremely suffering from anemia, malnutrition, and poor sanitation from old and small bunkhouses. In addition to the tiny rough roads, the children have to walk for an hour to reach the elementary school. It was a blessing, however, to see the church in Balatoc, regardless of their poor condition. But they are so zealous to share the Good News.

Finally, after I recovered, Uncle Sam and his family brought us to Asia Pacific Theological Seminary to take leave from the ministry for a year. God is gracious for giving us the opportunity to have a sabbatical leave so that Loie, my wife, could complete her MA in Ministry. In addition to this, the Philippine Bell International School gave my children an 80% scholarship. It was another surprise to me and my wife to receive such blessings from the Lord.

By God's grace, I'm receiving strength from God. I thank God for everything he has done in my life. I can say that God is the strength of my life. I have become stronger in faith and my commitment to the ministry. It has become more meaningful, regardless of the crisis and difficulties I've gone through. True enough that crisis is not a curse for Christians, but rather, it is an "opportunity" to experience the greatness of God (Luke 15:11).  
To God Be the Glory!

Rev. Joel A. Tejedo  
Director, Verna Linzey Child Care Ministry International  
Senior Pastor, Tabernacle of Grace Assembly of God, Philippines

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Contact Information:

Rev. Joel A. Tejedo  
Asia Pacific Theological Seminary  
444 Ambuklao Rd. Baguio City, Philippines  
Tel. #: (074)-442-7068  
Mobile #: 09187334955  
Email: [vlccmi2007@yahoo.com](mailto:vlccmi2007@yahoo.com)  
Website: [www.vlccm.org](http://www.vlccm.org)