

# The Crucible

by

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*"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." 2 Corinthians 4:7-10*

Years ago, I heard my pastor say something that has always stuck with me. He was talking about his own Christian walk, and he said, "In my more clear moments..." He went on to talk about moments of breakthrough. However, here was a great man of faith and of the Word, whom I greatly respected, basically admitting to our congregation that most of the time, things were not very clear for him. What a relief! At that time in my spiritual immaturity, I naively thought that someday I would get to a place where I had it all figured out. As I have matured in my walk, I totally understand what my pastor was saying. God seems to keep us in this perpetual state of cloudiness, and every once in a while, the Sun breaks through brightly and strongly and we see things clearly. It reminds me of that line in **1 Corinthians 13:12**, *"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."* I believe this is simply God's way of keeping us dependent upon him.

For the past several years, I have been going through a series of trials and hardships that have kept me in state of cloudiness most of the time. It is been a struggle to try to make sense of life and my part in it. It has kept my wife and myself on our knees, praying for clarity and a breakthrough. We've done our best to take it all in stride, be thankful for our lives and take the steps that are in front of us. However, if we were honest, we would say that it has been a season devoid of peace and abundance. I went in early to the office the other day to spend some time in the Prayer Chapel we created, and I heard a man on the radio mentioning how God used Hebrews 12 to help him through a low time. My ears perked up, and I went into the chapel and immediately turned to Hebrews 12.

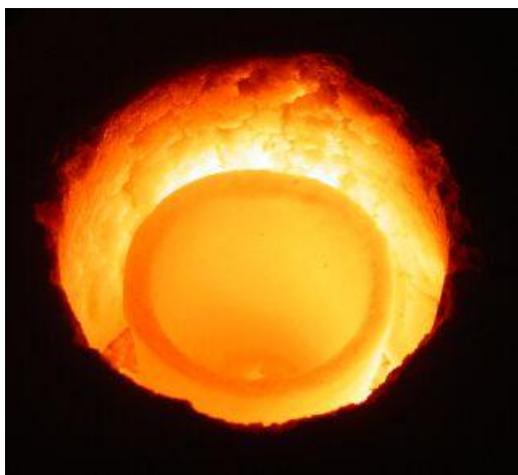
*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us..."*

Before I went forward, this verse prompted me to go backwards to Hebrews 11 to read about the *“great cloud of witnesses”* referenced. Hebrews 11 is the “Hall of Faith” chapter which gives reference to story after story of men and women who truly lived by faith. Verse 1 of Hebrews 11 defines faith, *“Being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”* I thought of all the things I’m hoping for and dreaming about, and I pondered if I had faith enough to get there. I then went on to Hebrews 12, so perhaps, I could find more of the answers I was seeking. It is about how God disciplines His sons.

*“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness.” Hebrews 12:7-10*

As a good Influencer and Journey brother, I pulled out my journal and began to jot down many thoughts and impressions from the entire chapter. I pondered what God wanted to say to me about my own trials and struggles and faith. Suddenly, as I sat there, meditating on all that I just digested, the Lord spoke a word to me. Now, I wasn’t reading about this word in any fashion...I know it was from the Holy Spirit.

The word was “Crucible”. Crucible? What’s a crucible? I thought a crucible was some sort of event or experience which changes our course in some way. So, I looked it up for clarity. A crucible is *“a container that is designed to withstand very high temperatures that will otherwise melt or alter its contents.”*



Then, it became clear to me. I AM A CRUCIBLE! God has designed me to withstand all the heat that I’ve been experiencing these past months and years. But at the same time, He has been changing me from the inside out. He has been melting my heart and altering my thoughts, my dreams, my expectations. The heat and the discipline were necessary to help me share in His holiness and to strengthen my faith and my resolve.

Something happened to me in that moment. I can't exactly describe it, other than to say that I had a confidence in the Lord and His plans for my life like I've never had before. I was ready to move forward, by Faith, into the territory He has for me, without looking back. No longer did I want my dreams to be achieved. I wanted His plans for me to be fulfilled. That's where I want to be and that's where I am heading.

Perhaps you, too, have been feeling the heat lately. Let me encourage you. You were made to withstand the heat, but it will continue until the transformation inside you is complete. Yield yourself to the Lord and to His process. He loves you and He had great things in store for you!