

CHAPTER ONE

Your Greater Is Coming

We all face setbacks in life, things we don't understand. We may have lost a loved one, had a friend walk out of our relationship, or are dealing with an illness. When we go through loss and bad breaks, it's easy to think that's the way it's always going to be. But our God is a God of restoration. He doesn't stop every difficulty, and He doesn't keep us from every challenge. But He promises He will pay us back for the wrongs. He will restore what's been stolen. David says in Psalm 71, "You have allowed me to suffer much hardship, but You will restore me to even greater honor." The suffering is a setup. God allows the difficulty, not to make you miserable but to restore you to greater honor. He never brings you out the same. He makes the enemy pay for bringing the trouble.

When you're in tough times, you need to remind yourself that it's not how your story ends. The loneliness, the bad break, or the anxiety is not your destiny. Greater is coming—greater joy, greater strength, greater relationships. The setback in your finances, the contract you lost, or the unfair childhood didn't stop your purpose. Greater opportunities are coming, greater favor is coming, greater influence is coming. The enemy brought the difficulty to set you back, but he didn't realize it's setting you up for God to

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show out in your life. He may have meant it for your harm, but God is turning it to your advantage.

When you're in difficulties, when life doesn't seem fair, you'll be tempted to get discouraged and lose your passion. Keep this phrase down in your spirit: *Your greater is coming.* God

didn't bring you this far to leave you. He wouldn't allow the pain if it were going to keep you from your destiny. It's just the opposite; it's going to thrust you into your destiny. The apostle Paul says, "These light afflictions are for a moment, but they are working in you an eternal weight of glory." The trouble is temporary, but the glory is permanent. The key is to not stay focused on the suffering; stay focused on the glory that's coming. It may be tough now. Life has dealt you an unfair hand, but that suffering is not in vain; it's serving a purpose. It's leading you to greater favor, greater anointing, greater victories.

I love David's attitude. He says, "God, You have allowed me to suffer much hardship," but he doesn't stop there. He could have stayed focused on all of his bad breaks and said, "God, I don't understand it. Why didn't my father believe in me? Why did he leave me out in the shepherds' fields when Samuel came to anoint the next king? Why is King Saul trying to kill me? I haven't done

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anything wrong. Why are all these people slandering me, trying to ruin my reputation?" Instead, he says, "God, I've had a lot of bad breaks. I've suffered much, but I know this: You will restore me to greater honor." He was thanking God for greater in the middle of the difficulty. When

you're in tough times, you can either talk about how big the problem is or talk about how big your God is. You can be complaining about the trouble or you can be thanking God that the trouble is only temporary.

If you're going to see the greater, you have to do as David did. In the middle of the suffering, start declaring that greater is coming. If the medical report doesn't look good, while you're taking the treatment you have to say, "Father, thank You that greater health is coming. Thank You that the number of my days You will fulfill. Thank You that I will run and not be weary." When you're fighting depression, anxiety, or fear, don't sit around thinking about how you're never going to get better. In the middle of the battle, you have to say, "Lord, thank You that greater joy is coming. Thank You that You're pushing back the forces of darkness." When it seems as though you're stuck in your career and your dream looks impossible, say, "Father, thank You that greater favor is coming. Thank You that You're opening doors that no man can shut, that You're taking me where I can't go on my own." Your attitude in the suffering is what's going to determine whether you come out with greater or whether you get stuck where you are.

Going Through Is the Way to Your Greater

The apostle Peter says, "After you have suffered a little while..." I'm not saying that if you have faith, you'll never have any suffering, never have things that aren't fair, never have situations that aren't turning around. But keep the right perspective. The suffering is not permanent. You may suffer for "a little while"—not for your whole life, not for the next twenty years. Don't believe the

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lie that what you're going through is never going to change. Don't believe the lie that you'll always struggle with the addiction, that you'll always have to deal with a sickness, or that you'll always have that trouble at work. The suffering is not going to last. It didn't come to stay; it came to pass. What God started in your life, He's going to finish.

But here's the key: To see the greater, you have to go through the suffering. I wish I could tell you that greater comes by just being positive, just having faith, just honoring God. There are levels you can only reach by going through some difficulties. Don't get stuck in the suffering. Don't get bitter because somebody walked out on you. Don't settle in the depression, thinking that's your lot in life. Don't let the setback in your finances convince you that you'll always struggle. Keep an attitude of faith and go through it. Keep believing when every thought is telling you it's never going to change. Keep talking like it's going to happen when nothing is improving. Keep declaring God's promises when it seems as though it's not doing any good. That suffering is a test. It's an opportunity to show God that you're not going to get discouraged, give up on your dreams, and lose your passion.

Peter goes on to say, "After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore you, strengthen you, and establish you." God has already called you to live a victorious life. He's already called you to overcome every obstacle. You've been handpicked by the Creator of the universe. The God who spoke worlds into existence chose you before you could choose Him. The forces trying to stop you are no match for the God who has already called you. Now do as David did and go through the suffering with faith,

knowing that your greater is coming. If you keep the right attitude, God Himself is going to restore you. That means that He's not going to send the angels, He's not going to ask Gabriel to do it, but the Most High God is going to suddenly turn things around. He's going to suddenly heal, suddenly deliver, suddenly promote. When it's your time, you're not going to come out the same; you're going to come out better.

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You may have already passed this test. You've been doing the right thing, suffering with a smile, praising through the pain, worshipping instead of worrying, being good to people who aren't good to you. Get ready. Greater is coming. God is about to do a new thing. Problems that look permanent are about to turn around. Dreams you thought were too far gone are about to suddenly come to pass. The right people, divine connections, are about to show up. Greater influence is coming, greater favor is coming, greater honor is coming. The enemy thinks he is pulling you back to keep you there. He doesn't realize that like a bow and arrow, the more he pulls you back, the farther God is about to shoot you. The enemy thinks he is hindering you, but the truth is that he is helping you. The suffering is a setup. God allowed it so He can launch you to a new level of your destiny. Don't get discouraged by what you're going through. You couldn't become who you were created to be without the disappointments, without the bad breaks, without the struggle. I know it's uncomfortable, and I know you don't like it, but keep reminding yourself that greater is coming.

Everything Is Coming Back

In 1 Samuel 30, when David and his six hundred men were returning from a mission in Philistine territory, in the distance they saw smoke billowing in the sky. It looked as though it was coming from their city of Ziklag. I can imagine that they started walking faster, wondering what was going on. When they arrived home, their worst fears came to pass. The Amalekites had raided their city, burned their houses, taken their wives and children captive as well as all their possessions. Here David was out doing the right thing and the wrong thing happened. It

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didn't seem fair. But just because you have trouble doesn't mean you're doing something wrong. Sometimes, because you're doing the right thing, you're facing difficulties. There are forces trying to keep you from your destiny. When you understand this principle that every setback is a setup for God to take you further, the suffering is putting you in position for

greater honor. Then you won't fall apart when you face bad breaks. You won't get bitter because you have an unexpected challenge. You'll stay in faith, knowing that the enemy wouldn't be trying to stop you if he didn't know something amazing was in your future.

David and his men were so discouraged that they wept until they could not weep anymore. If that wasn't bad enough, David's men were so upset about losing their wives and children that they began to talk about stoning him. David could have sat around depressed, in self-pity, but the Scripture says, "David began to encourage himself in the Lord his God." Maybe that's when he

wrote, “I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise will continually be in my mouth.” Maybe he wrote, “When I go through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.” Maybe in those ashes he wrote, “Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.” Instead of complaining, he started thanking God that He was still on the throne.

Sometimes you can't find anyone else to encourage you. Your friends are busy, your pastor is out of town, your phone is dead, and you can't find me on television. That's God letting you know that you have to encourage yourself. You have to dig down deep and say, “I am not going to let this bad break, this disappointment, or this injustice steal my joy and sour my life. Lord, thank You that You are bigger than this sickness, greater than this opposition, more powerful than the people who are trying to stop me. I know that Your being for me is more than the world being against me.” You have to stir up your faith, stir up your praise. Start speaking victory over your life. Start thanking God that He's fighting your battles, that this too shall pass, that greater is coming.

David prayed and asked if he should go after the enemy. God answered, “Yes, pursue them. You will surely recover everything that was taken from you.” You may be in a difficult time when you've lost some things—lost your dream, lost your joy, lost your health. God is saying, “If you get your fire back and start moving forward, you will surely recover everything you lost.” The enemy may be laughing now, but you're going to have the last laugh. God has the final say. He saw the injustice. He saw who did you wrong, what didn't work out, what was taken from you.

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He's saying, “Get ready. Everything is coming back. You're getting back your health, your children, your finances, your dreams, your

joy, your peace.” It’s not maybe, not there’s a good chance, but surely you will recover everything. *Surely* means without a doubt, that you can count on it. God used the word *surely* not for Himself, but for us. He is saying, “Be confident. It’s all coming back.”

Your Reward Is Coming

David and his men left the city and headed out in pursuit. They were not certain where the Amalekites had gone, but they found an Amalekite slave in a field who had gotten sick three days previous

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and been left behind to die. David gave him food and water and promised that if he would lead them to the Amalekites, David would spare his life. This young man took them right to the enemy’s camp. When you get your passion back and go after what belongs to you, God will

have the right people in your path to help you. He’ll bring divine connections, people who will use their influence and expertise to take you where you couldn’t go on your own.

When David and his men showed up, the Amalekites were having a big party, celebrating their victory, eating, drinking, dancing. I’ve learned that sometimes the enemy celebrates too soon. He doesn’t realize that you’re down but you’re not out. You had a setback, but really it’s setting you up. The enemy thought the disappointment would cause you to be sour, to give up on your dreams. He thought the bad break would cause you to stay sitting in the ashes, discouraged and bitter. He didn’t know you would encourage yourself in the Lord. He didn’t know that when you

got knocked down, you would get back up again. He didn't know that instead of complaining, you would start praising. He may be celebrating now, but don't worry. Your time is coming. Right now God is arranging things in your favor. He's lining up the right people. He's pushing back forces of darkness. Things are happening that you can't see. If you keep moving forward in faith, you're going to come into promotion, healing, breakthroughs—things that you couldn't make happen on your own.

David and his men attacked the Amalekites and wiped them out. Not a single Amalekite was left in the camp. The Scripture says, "David got everything back that the Amalekites had taken. They rescued their wives and children. Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back." You may have lost some things. Perhaps your loved one didn't make it, and it feels as though a part of you was taken with them, and you have lost the joy you had. Maybe you've struggled with an addiction for so long that you've lost the desire to be free. Perhaps you've accepted that it's too late now and your child is never going to get back on course. God is going to do for you what He did for David. One day you're going to say, "Nothing is missing. I got my joy back. I got my health back. I got my dreams back. I got my freedom back. I got my child back." God is not going to bring you out partially, where you get most of what you lost. God doesn't do things halfway. Nothing is going to be missing.

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It was a great victory that David got everything back. But God doesn't bring you out the same. When you go through suffering, your greater is coming. The Scripture says, "David's men rounded up all the Amalekites' flocks and herds and took all their possessions. These belonged to them as their reward." There is a reward

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for going through difficulties with a good attitude. We would be grateful if God just brought us back to where we were. But when you go through challenges in faith with your head held high, knowing that God is fighting your battles, then a reward is coming. You're not just going to come out, you're going to come out better.

The Suffering Is a Setup

Back in the 1950s, my father had been pastoring a very successful, growing church for many years. They had just built a beautiful new sanctuary. He was on the state board for his denomination, and his future looked bright. At that time, my sister Lisa was born with something like cerebral palsy. After the doctors told my parents that she would probably never be able to walk or feed herself, my father went to a downtown hotel for a week by himself to study the Scripture in a new way. He had been taught in seminary that God healed people in biblical times but that period of divine healing had passed away. He read the Scripture that says, "Jesus Christ is the same

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yesterday, today, and forever." He realized that there never was a day of miracles, but there is a God of miracles. And He's still alive.

My father went back to his church with this new message of faith and victory and healing. He thought everyone would be excited, but it was just the opposite. This message didn't fit

their tradition. There was so much opposition that he ended up feeling he had to leave the church. He was very discouraged. He had poured his heart and soul into those people. My mother was twenty-six years old at the time, and she had lifelong friends who never spoke to her again.

Instead of sitting around frustrated and bitter over what didn't work out, my parents went out and started Lakewood. They found an old feedstore that had holes in the floor and cracks in the walls. They cleaned it out, and ninety people showed up for church. My father went from a big prestigious church with a beautiful new auditorium to a run-down little wood building with a fraction of the people. Year after year my father kept being his best, pouring into those ninety people, not listening to the critics. The opposition said that Lakewood would never last, that he was wasting his time. But when you suffer much, God gives you a promise that greater honor is coming—greater favor, greater opportunity, greater influence. Against all odds, my sister Lisa slowly got better and better. Today she's perfectly healthy. And in 1972, Lakewood started to grow, with people coming from all over Houston. It kept growing and growing, and here we are over sixty years later, still going strong.

We all have unfair things happen. People come against us. There are betrayals, and there are sicknesses. It's tempting to get discouraged and say, "God, why did this happen? Why did these people push me out? Why was my daughter born with an illness?" There are some things that we're not going to understand. Don't spend your life trying to answer all the whys of life. That's going to frustrate you. God knows how to work all things for your good. He says that He will pay you back double for the unfair things that have happened. The key is to go through that suffering with a good attitude, knowing that God has promised you that your greater is coming. It may not happen overnight, but God

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is faithful. He sees you doing the right thing when the wrong thing has happened, taking the high road, overlooking the offense. He sees you being your best at work when people aren't giving you the credit. He sees you standing against the illness, staying in faith when you could be complaining.

Your time is coming. That suffering is a setup. As with my father, you're going to see the hand of God take you where you can't go on your own. Don't worry about the people who have tried to push you down. God is preparing a table for you in the presence of your enemies. They're going to see you promoted, honored, in a position of influence. It doesn't go unnoticed when you fight through health issues with a good attitude, still thanking God, still being good to others. You've gone through the suffering, now get ready for the greater—greater health, greater freedom, greater breakthroughs, greater victories.

Greater Honor Is Coming

In Genesis 29 is the story of two sisters, Rachel and Leah. When a young man named Jacob saw Rachel, he fell head over heels for her. It was love at first sight. The Scripture says, "Rachel was beautiful in every way, with a lovely face and a shapely figure." When God says you're fine, you know you're fine. Rachel had it going on. Jacob asked her father, Laban, if he could marry her. Laban said he could if he worked seven years for him. Jacob worked faithfully for those seven years, but Laban didn't keep his word. He tricked Jacob. At the weddings back then, the brides wore very thick veils,

so you couldn't see who was behind the veil. Jacob assumed the bride was Rachel, but it was Leah. The Scripture says, "Leah had weak eyes and was dull looking." I don't know what weak eyes mean, but I know what dull looking is. I have a brother named Paul.

Laban made sure Jacob had too much to drink at the wedding. The next morning when Jacob woke up, he saw weak eyes staring back at him and nearly passed out. He went and found Laban and said, "What in the world are you doing? You know our agreement was for Rachel." Laban responded, "Yes, but our tradition says the oldest daughter must be married first. Work for me another seven years and you can have Rachel." Jacob was so dumb—I mean *so in love*—that he worked another seven years and finally married Rachel, too. But the whole time, Jacob never really loved Leah. All of his attention was focused on Rachel. But Rachel was unable to have children and remained barren. Meanwhile, Leah gave him son after son, hoping this would win his affection, but it didn't change anything. Years later, Rachel finally gave birth to two sons, Joseph and Benjamin.

All those years, Leah lived in a loveless marriage, feeling unwanted, not chosen, marginalized. I'm sure she was tempted to have low self-esteem, to not feel good about who she was. But God sees when you're not being treated right. He sees when you're being overlooked, pushed down, and discounted. Leah could have been depressed and gotten bitter, but she just kept suffering in silence, doing the right thing with a good attitude, not complaining. When it came time for God to choose a family line to bring Jesus through, He didn't choose one of Rachel's sons, even though she was the favorite wife. He didn't choose Joseph, whom we read so much about in the book of Genesis. He didn't choose Benjamin. He chose Leah's son Judah. Jesus came through the tribe of Judah. All of Leah's sons became founders of six of the twelve tribes of Israel.

What's the point? Even when people dishonor you, don't get discouraged. God knows how to honor you. He knows how to cause you to shine. People don't have the final say. They may try to discount you and make you feel less-than. Keep your head high. You're not who people say you are. You are who God says you are.

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He calls you a masterpiece. He says you are fearfully and wonderfully made. You have royal blood flowing through your veins. He's crowned you with favor. You may have to suffer in silence at times and do the right thing when it's not fair. You may have to work hard when you're not getting credit and be good to people who aren't good to you. God is keeping the records. When you go through much suffering, He promises that greater honor is coming. Greater favor. Greater influence. Those who discount you now will look up to you one day. People who won't give you the time of day will strive for your attention one day. God knows how to pay you back. He knows how to make your wrongs right.

When you're in tough times, keep this phrase playing in your spirit: *Greater is coming*. The difficulty is not there to defeat you; it's there to promote you. You may have lost some things in the past, and you've accepted that it's never going to happen. This is a new day. Things are shifting in your favor. God is saying to you what He said to David: "You're going to get everything back. Your joy is coming back, your health is coming back, your children, your dreams, opportunities, freedom. I believe and declare that nothing will be missing, large or small.