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- *When “bad” things happen to “good” people*
- *Faith for challenging times*

God protects. God comforts. God lifts up. God delivers. God alleviates. God loves in all ways. Each of you is blessed even when you are unaware of the nature of that presence, but you are not blessed because you are in a group of faith. You are not blessed more than others. You are not blessed any less, for all human beings are equally blessed. All human beings are loved and supported equally, but you are fortunate in that you have a glimpse of that presence, that blessing. You are aware of the existence of the Spirit Center that creates all and that is all.

When you are given human life, you are given in order to develop—to develop an understanding of love in all its forms, but most especially a love that expects nothing in return, for such a love is unconditional. You love for the simple reason that another is, another exists, and yet in this process of human life, every individual experiences fear, doubt, exhaustion, discouragement, anger, guilt, impatience. Because these are natural and belong to the human condition, such responses are part of God’s intention for each of you. It is not God’s plan, it is not God’s “wish” if it may be thought as such, that all suffering cease, that all pain disappear, and that life should ultimately be pure joy. That is not the nature of human life, that is not why you were given life, and it is not the goal that you are being commissioned to pursue.

You are not asked to be inhuman. You are asked to proceed accompanied by a conviction of the necessity of faith. This is not to suggest that you must live your lives with purpose only in the company of faith, but rather that you live your lives in recognition of the need to have faith. If you are committed to an acknowledgment of faith becoming a part of your lives, then you are doing what is asked by God. The mere acknowledgment of the value of faith is all that is required.

You go through your lives in faith and out of faith. You go through your lives with hope, but you also proceed at times with despair. Regardless of these experiences, it is your acknowledgment, your affirmation of the existence of faith and its desirability in life that is strength-giving.

In a sense, you are not being asked to win the race, but merely to recognize that there is a goal, there is an objective, that life is not pointless. Recognizing the reality of a goal is the reason you are presented with this opportunity. We have often said you are not asked to become love, but to become loving. That is the goal. But if you see no goal, if you see no purpose, however it may be thwarted, life has no meaning to you and that is a great loss.

When you face deep challenges, crevasses in life in which the bottom is unrecognized, it is important merely to know that there is value in having faith. When we say that you learn through your challenges, such statements do not imply that the

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learning is easy, nor do such statements imply that the challenges are the only way to learn. What is important is merely to know that growth does happen. No individual remains stagnant. No individual falls back. You may fall forward in your desire to move ahead, but you can never fall back. Whatever your life decisions, there is no movement of spirit that is contrary to the development toward love. You can do nothing to stop your growth. You can do much to enhance it, but stopping and reversing is not possible, for spiritual growth always moves toward Light. You must have confidence in that motion.

When you wonder why bad things happen to good people, you must realize that there is an error inherent in that question, for you are assuming that there are “bad” things. And when you say “bad” things and “good” people, there is an implication of faultlessness, that good people are people who are all good and perfect. Neither is true. No things occur that are totally without some Light. The most heinous crimes against humanity have within them the possibility for growth. It is not the crime itself, but its impact that we speak of. Good people suffer, but the truth is all people suffer and all people are good. We are not singling out the good from the bad, and you must also avoid that. The question is not why bad things happen to good people, but rather why challenges happen to everyone.

When you suffer, you are not singled out. When you lose someone you love, you are not the only person in such agony, but your agony is nevertheless agony. Such suffering is not a punishment. It is not God in retribution. The agony that is experienced is experienced because all human beings experience agony. For that very reason, all human beings have the capacity to be compassionate. All human beings have the capacity to reach out, to support, to comfort.

Human life is filled with opportunity. That opportunity comes as an accompaniment to themes of suffering and rejoicing. You are given life. Rejoice in that fact! You are given pain. Acknowledge its reality. Take in that reality, but also recognize that out of such pain comes growth, just as out of great joy comes growth. Growth occurs because you are responding to what life provides. It is ultimately of little importance whether your response is anger or acceptance. The response is the response. Your response to life changes from moment to moment. The fact that you respond means that you are growing without taking away the pain or diminishing the joy.

You grow because you are. You have a response because you are. You acknowledge a goal in life because you are engaged in your life. Faith is not so much an affirmation that all is well, rather faith is an acknowledgment that God is and that you are, and thereby you are blessed. You are part of the goal you seek.

You seek peace within because you have experienced an inner peace. You seek comfort because you have experienced comfort. You seek love because you have experienced love. Ultimately you seek what you know exists, not just what you hope exists.

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The seeking of the spirit is a desire to return to its creation. When you seek comfort, you are seeking a goal that you know exists somewhere, somehow. When you lose hope, when you lose faith, you lose sight of a goal. Suffering is indeed a means of growth. It is not the only one.

When you rejoice, give thanks to the Spirit Center that provided the means of experiencing what is joyful. When you experience pain, acknowledge that pain is a part of being human, and in that pain God also is, and because God is, you are never alone, you are never separated.

You are given life not because it's easy, but because it's important. You are given life to grow, to develop, to become, to enhance, to affirm, to love. There is no greater goal than such acknowledgment, but knowing the goal and knowing where you are at this moment on your pathway, it takes only a little effort to see the distance yet to be traveled. If you focus your attention on the distance, you will be discouraged. If you focus your attention on the direction in which you are moving, you are given strength for the journey and assurance of the path.

Your paths may be straight for awhile. They may be characterized as many bends and seeming blockades. Whatever the vision of your path may be at any moment in your lives, have faith that the path does lead to where you must evolve. Life is not random. Your path is not random.

Accept the reality of discouragement, but also acknowledge that there is always a basis for faith. There are always grounds for a humble vulnerability that asks nothing, expects nothing, but is willing to be accompanied by love.

Your journeys have meaning because of those who join you on that path. Rejoice being in company with those who also acknowledge the existence of a goal. Be not afraid. Walk in the Light!

Amen.