



# REFLECTIONS

September 30, 2018

**Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.**

*James 1:2-3*

## Strength-Building

Daily drives often take me past parking lots of those fitness centers where people go to work out. Most of the time those lots appear well occupied, and drivers of those vehicles are seen scurrying in or coming out usually carrying a change of clothes in small travel bags. Some of them I know, and some of those I know are nearing addiction to the aerobic routines and strength-building exercises they go there for. I'm not among them.

Strength-building, at least the physical kind, is not my thing. It's hard work to keep pace with the treadmill; it's painful to stretch the ligaments; and the effort of lifting weights is unappealing. But I must confess, those who routinely practice strength-building exercises have stronger and more flexible bodies than I have. Strength-building pays off.

In various ways, we teach strength-building to our children to prepare them for the sports they play and for life ahead of them. Yet we work even harder to make their lives easier than ours have been. Reduce the conditioning time, especially the hard stuff, so life has more pleasure and less stress. But does reduced conditioning result in more successes and fewer disappointments, or more victories and fewer defeats? Which of those—disappointments, successes, victories, and defeats—make them stronger?

There's a story of a young boy observing the struggles of a caterpillar morphing into a beautiful butterfly. As he watched the struggles of a common insect, the boy thought he could help reduce the effort and lessen the pain of the process. So, he clipped the caterpillar's skin just a little with some manicure scissors to ease the suffering and struggle. Perhaps he did reduce the effort required; but lessening the struggle deprived the butterfly of the strength-building exercise that would have developed its wings to enable it to fly.

Some butterflies are known to fly as far as 3,000 miles during their migration. They can fly at speeds up to 20 miles per hour, and pilots have seen them at heights of 11,000 feet. The stress of a caterpillar's transformation strengthens its wings that enable it to fly.

### **A British Proverb**

*Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it became a butterfly.*

The things we struggle with are the very things that build the strength and character to become who we are or want to be. So...

*we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.* (Romans 5:3-5)

*You are the light of the world,*

*Richard +*

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