

The background of the entire image is a photograph of a hiker standing on a mountain peak at sunrise. The hiker is silhouetted against the bright sun, which is low on the horizon, creating a lens flare effect. The hiker has their arms raised in a gesture of triumph or joy. The landscape consists of rolling mountain ranges under a clear blue sky.

Turning Your Pain into Gain

Dr Cecil Stewart OBE

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Many suffer the pain of a broken relationship, loss of a loved one or disappointment in exam results. No matter how deep the hurt or pain, you can turn it into gain and help yourself and countless others in the process. I know this is possible because I experienced real pain as a young person through severe anxiety, depression and tuberculosis which led to isolation and hopelessness. This is why I want to share with you how my pain turned to gain and I promise you, you can experience the same!

One of the key things I discovered was that no matter how low I felt I could rise again through changing my attitude from one of negativity to expectation of good things in the future because I was not alone, but God almighty was with me and had a good plan for my life. I found real recovery began when I changed my focus from myself to the provision that had been made for me when Jesus gave His life on the cross and took all my sorrow, grief and pain as revealed in **1 Peter 2:24** and **Isaiah 53:4**, then I began to give thanks to the Lord instead of sitting silent and sad. Soon I was able to rise above anxiety regardless of the pain in my left lung and over a short period of just a few weeks the TB was gone and the plan for me to go to the sanatorium was no longer necessary. I well remember going to the Durham

St Clinic in Belfast for x-ray and being shown the results and told 'your TB is no longer active – only a scar remains on your lung'. **Soon the heavy depression began to lift and I knew that my head was no longer in a vice through the horrible depression. I found the more I gave thanks to the Lord and developed an attitude of gratitude the more I recovered.**

Another key discovery I made was the importance of renewing my mind. This did not come easy as I had developed a habit of thinking negatively and feeling discouraged. By the grace of God I became aware that I must be very determined to stop thinking dark thoughts and instead fill my mind with uplifting thoughts, as revealed in **Romans 12:2** and **Philippians 4:8** which show we all have the power to choose what we think on and this was vital for my recovery, but it took strong persistence to take the time even when I didn't feel like it and discipline myself to meditate on things of good report daily. Scriptures like **Romans 8:32** and **1 John 5:4** were so powerful in my recovery.

Also, while I was still feeling unwell I started to reach out to others who were struggling and helped them. This certainly was a key in turning my pain into gain and the more I prayed for others and shared hope with them the more strength I gained.

Many live a miserable life because they are too focused on themselves and fail to reach out and bless those in their own family and speak encouragement to those in their world.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says – 'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again'.

A wonderful model of these principles and many more are found in **2 Kings 4:1-7**. **Please don't consider this a sermon but a living example that will work for your good today.** We see a mother who suffered great loss, her husband had died and her 2 sons were about to be taken from her because she couldn't pay her debt, so she was about to lose her good name also.

Isn't it amazing how we all go through seasons of loss when one bad thing after another happens at a time when we

feel least able to cope? However this painful situation was turned around to gain and we can take these same steps to turn our own loss into gain, so I urge you to be patient and persistent to read carefully how this can happen in your life, your family, your relationships and finances. This mother and her family had a relationship with the Lord who is the life-giver and who loves us a million times more than any relative on earth. We notice this family feared the Lord, not with a terrifying fear but with a deep honour and respect for Him and His word. They had been making an investment in the kingdom of God and looking after their relationship with Him. You may feel you have no relationship with your Creator but the good news is that you can begin a relationship right now by acknowledging Jesus as your Saviour and Lord – study carefully the following, **Romans 10:9-10**, **John 14:6** and **Acts 4:12**. These wonderful verses will come alive within you as you let the Holy Spirit make them real in your heart, then speak them out loud regularly.

Notice this mother in **2 Kings 4** fought for her family by going to the prophet Elisha and calling out to him. She was determined to get out of her anxious zone and take risks for good change. **Elisha asked her 2 important questions – 1. What shall I do for you? 2. What have you got in the house?** It is important to state clearly what it is we desire the Lord to do for us and the change that we seek. She answered 'I have nothing only a jar of oil'. Then he said 'go

to your neighbours everywhere, borrow empty vessels, not a few'. So Elisha was taking her focus off her pain and putting it on gain but she had to exercise her faith and go. It is interesting she had neighbours willing to help. Then she was to come in and shut the door on her and her sons.

It is so important to shut the door on distractions and have family time together, that's when the oil of blessing flows during times of fellowship when we honour the word of the Lord and each other.

Notice what happened next as they poured out the oil into all the vessels. A supernatural supply was turned on and an overflow took place so they not only had enough to pay the past debt but an abundance to live off in the future. Here we see a picture of how Jesus paid all our debt of sin when He died on the cross and rose again, but also He provided eternal life in abundance to meet all our needs for time and eternity, so don't let the devil put guilt and shame on you. Jesus took all of it at the cross. **2 Corinthians 5:21** – 'For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.'

Does this sound too good to be true? Well I assure you it is true and I have experienced unmerited favour again and

again. But remember faith comes by hearing the word – see **Romans 10:17**. It's surprising how people will sit for hours in doctors' surgeries or hospital to get their health back but they are reluctant to take time daily and read the bible which shows the great inheritance they have been left. So read the books of Ephesians and Colossians and all the scriptures you can so you will develop an appetite for spiritual food which is the word of God. Remember we can choose to let trouble drive us away from the Lord, which would bring destruction or like this mother we can run to the Lord.

Now let me give you key steps that turned pain into gain for this mother and her sons in **2 Kings 4**.

1. She cried out for change

She realised that her life and the life of her family was under threat and refused to give up even though her situation looked impossible. **Hebrews 11:6** says – 'But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him'.

We can experience good change that will meet the needs of our families and empower them to really live and serve the purpose of God right in the midst of adversity. **Change will come but the good news is that we can take charge of change and turn it around for our good in accordance**

with God's good plan – Ephesians 2:10 – 'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.'

2. She still had hope

Even after all the loss she still believed for better days. **Philippians 1:19-21** reveals how Paul expected good change even though he had lost everything and was imprisoned for his faith. When we hold fast to the word and will of God our pain will turn to gain.

During our ministry in Romania, Lara Martin, who wrote an inspiring song entitled 'Voice of Hope' sang in one of our meetings there. One could sense hope coming alive in people's hearts as she sang. The chorus of this song goes like this – You are the voice of hope, The anchor of my soul, Where there seems to be no way, You make it possible, You are the prince of peace, Amidst adversity, My lips will shout for joy, To you the most high. Lara came through major challenges in her own life and this was her living testimony to the goodness of God. Today you can experience new hope arising in your heart as you meditate on the hope we have in Christ and begin to develop a lifestyle of thanksgiving and praise that will certainly transform your life.

Ephesians 5:18-20 exhorts us to sing and make melody in our hearts – 'And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess;

but be filled with the Spirit. Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ’.

3. She had relationship

Her husband had honoured the Lord and invested in His kingdom, that’s why he could leave an enduring legacy. Life’s greatest assets are not money, property or man’s approval and prestige; it is relationship with the Lord and our families that brings priceless treasures. **1 Timothy 6:19** exhorts us to lay up a good foundation against the time to come.

It is not what we leave to our children that is important; it is what we leave in them that really matters! **Matthew 6:20** says ‘But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal’. **Their relationship with the Lord saved their whole family and turned their pain into gain.**

4. She knew her source

She went to the man of God, not the witch doctor. **2 Corinthians 3:5** says – ‘our sufficiency is of God’. When we live in divine awareness we will have an active faith that keeps us in touch with the source of all good things. **James 1:17** – ‘Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning’.

1 Timothy 2:5 says – ‘For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus’.

2 Corinthians 9:8 says – ‘And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work’.

5. She discovered what she had

We all are more blessed than we realise. She had this oil all along but never knew its value. **2 Peter 1:3** says ‘According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue’.

It is our job to show others what they have in Christ!

Proverbs 21:20 shows ... ‘oil is in the dwelling of the wise’.

Often we hear discouraging talk of what we lack but when we count our blessings and use every opportunity to inspire others we will see that pain turns to gain and families are strengthened in their relationships so they become part of the answer more than part of the problem.

When we use what we have God will give us more. We can all use a good attitude toward others. **We can be agents of encouragement.** We can smile and give our family member a hug and be a blessing to them. **Matthew 25:29** reveals that when we use what we have more will be given.

6. She was still listening

James 1:19 exhorts us to be swift to hear and slow to speak. Airline pilots realise the importance of listening to air traffic control. We must listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit who has given us the ultimate guidance system. **James 1:25** exhorts us to be doers of the word and not hearers only. **Proverbs 3:5** tells us – ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding’.

After I received the worst news about my health in 2003 I was able by the grace of God to still listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and the word of God which gave me life and faith to overcome. **Isaiah 61:3** states ‘To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified’. **We can shut the door on our past and allow the Lord to open a new door to a glorious future.**

7. She put her faith into action

This mother listened carefully to the words of Elisha the prophet and immediately carried out everything he said in detail. This is the key to turning our pain into gain. **James 2:17** reminds us – ‘without works faith is dead’.

You may feel unable to change your adverse circumstances but when we use the little we have it’s amazing how pain turns to gain and the little we have turns out to be much more valuable than we realised. So give that word of encouragement to your family, smile even when you feel like frowning and like the family in **2 Kings 4** your life will take on a whole new meaning and remember trouble is inevitable but misery is optional!

Don't agree with your adverse circumstances, use your faith to change them!

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Christian Communications Network

547 Antrim Road, Belfast

County Antrim, Northern Ireland

BT15 3BU

Tel: +44 (0) 28 9077 9552

Email: ccn@ccnorg.com





Christian Communications Network
547 Antrim Road, Belfast
County Antrim, Northern Ireland
BT15 3BU

Tel: +44 (0) 28 9077 9552

Email: ccn@ccnorg.com