



Resilient

Part 1 – Rolling With the Punches
Pastor Ted Cunningham

Today we kick off a brand-new series called resilient, and today we are talking about Rolling with the punches. Rolling with the punches is just all about being able to take a hit. Maybe not brace for a full impact, but I can take a hit and I can keep moving; I can stay light on my toes. I think you saw in the bumper video that I can even get knocked down, but I want to be one who can bounce back, who can get up.

How many think that in recent years we've seen a lack of resilience in our country and more pointed toward our church and those who call themselves followers of Jesus. What do we need to do to take steps in resilience? Because I see too many people today getting knocked down and not getting back up. Getting knocked down and stopping. Getting knocked down and no longer getting up, going forward, and growing.

I'm almost 50, but I don't want this series to come off... I wanted the first part to say, "Suck it up Buttercup" but I thought that's not the tone we want for the series. Because there are people dealing with some really heavy, heavy situations, circumstances, trials, and testing right now. And we don't want the tone of this to be, "Just get over it and get on with life!" No, we want to look to the scripture clearly for what it means to be a resilient believer, full of perseverance and endurance, and getting up when knocked down.

I grew up in the 80's. Who grew up in the 80's? Probably the best decade this country has ever seen. But we used to watch shows on television. Remember in the 80's it was daredevils and stuntmen. We even had a show called That's Incredible. Oh, I loved that show. Before a stunt, they would always say what? A guy would come the screen and go, "Boys and girls, do not try this at home." We probably will the next morning. Especially after watching an Evil Knievel jump. This is what our neighborhood looked like after an Evil Knievel jump.

I drive around Branson and the Ozarks all the time. I'm sad because I don't think in my entire time living here... I know I haven't seen it in the last 10 years. I don't see kids jumping their bikes anymore. Why not? I hope that out of today's message, some of you will go home and build a ramp to teach your kids how to jump their bike. Out there in the street where the cars are, that's where you do it. I love this picture because you can see... This guy's got no helmet, no pads. You don't need them. If you survived the 80's, you're a resilient individual, but here's how you knew who your true friends were. They were the ones who would lay down on the ground for you. These are good friends.

But these are your best friends. I'm not a geometry expert, but I can tell by where he's at and the trajectory that this guy here ain't making it. And a couple of things – he's smiling and this ain't his first rodeo. So, let's see some kids jumping bikes today. Let's do it.

In a couple of weeks, we are going to have Move up Sunday and they are going to do pushups out in the courtyard. I think the of the age that we ate ice cream in our toilet paper rolls... And I told Stephanie "Make sure the pushups that we have out there are as nasty looking as this thing right here. I don't see this a lot anymore either. Kids sleeping in the back window of the car. I don't see kids riding in the back of trucks. I remember once we had to go about a mile and we didn't have enough room in the car, so two of my friends just laid on the hood. That was the 80's.

Some of you are new to the church... There are some families going "This is reckless." Then parents say we should probably get serious about child safety in the car, so we had our first car seats back in the 1970's. The problem with the kids you're raising these days... you're strapping them in like you're launching them into outer space. Let them have a little fun with it. We got so cocky in 80's with our resilience that we believed that Russia was going to take us out with a nuclear bomb. I was born outside of Chicago, so we were always ready. We knew we'd be one of the target cities. We were so cocky about our resilience we believed a school desk would protect us. We did drills. If you don't know what this is, this is a school desk. Instead of doing fire drills, we did nuclear blast drills where would get under these desks and kiss our... No, I'm not going to do that joke. I saw the teachers out in the hall laughing at us. They were always laughing because this school desk ain't gonna do nothing. But we were resilient.

Let me give you three scenarios and see if you've experienced this in your life in recent days. Maybe you go home for a family gathering and you're talking to a family member who just quit their job, and they are fired up. "Wow, quitting your job that's a pretty big deal. What happened, what was said?" They tell you what was said or what happened and after they share with you, you're like, *That's not a big deal. I don't think I'd quit a job over that.*" Student's you're going back to school in a couple of weeks and you're going to talk to a friend who talked about another person and said, "I know we used to be friends, but we're not friends anymore." "Wow, you guys were friends for 10 years. Why did you end that friendship?" They tell you what happened and you're like, *That's not a reason to end a friendship. That's trivial. That's something you should be able to get over.*"

Bring it closer to home. Maybe you've heard somebody has left the church. We have guests here from out of town too and maybe you've had people leave your church. I think it happens all around the country. And when you ask people why they left their faith community... "Leaving your faith community is a big deal. Why did you leave?" And then they tell you and you're like, *I don't think that's a big deal.*

Are there good reasons to quit a job? Yes, of course there are. Are there good reasons to end a friendship? Yes, if it gets toxic, of course there are good reasons to end a friendship. Are there good reasons to leave a church? You can answer yes; it's not rhetorical. For some of you, there are some really Good reasons. And you're the reason. No, I'm just kidding. That's a joke. So, we're not minimizing today. We know there are good reasons to leave your job, good reasons to end a friendship, and good reasons to find a new faith community.

What we are talking about today and then for the next few weeks... Today, specifically, we're looking at insults. How to roll with the punches when someone criticizes you and insults you. What does Jesus say about that and how do we move forward.

Next week, we're going to talk about conflict. I just see too many conflicts taking out relationships, taking out marriages, taking out families. How do we bounce back from a conflict.

Then we'll look at trials. Adam Donyes is going to end this series. Didn't we pick a perfect one to end the series? Adam is ready to go. He watched that trailer and he was ready to go through a brick wall.

But here is the definition of resilient – To withstand or bounce back from difficult situations. To withstand or bounce back from difficult conversations. That's the resilience you don't see today in a lot of people. Just quitting and ending and walking away over trivial, I would even say nonsensical reasons. It's the bounce back part. Some of you truly do feel knocked down. The last message in this series is knocked down, but not out. What you do to get up and keep moving.

We are going to look at five lessons today on resilience, specifically when it comes to those who insult you.

1. Resilience does not retaliate when insulted. But what do we do? You insult me, I'm insulting you. You come back at me, I'm coming back at you. And we stand off with the person. Jesus is going to teach us another way. Because if you are not careful and the insults are coming at you and you respond in kind, not kindly, but kind, you're going back at that person. If you're not careful, you'll become like that person. You'll take on the traits of that person. And everything they are saying about you, you're just validating it. The believer in Christ Jesus does not retaliate. So, Jesus is going to share clearly. We are going to go to the sermon on the Mount to start today. Mathew 5: 38-44 **38 "You have heard that it was said...** We're going to see that twice in this text. **'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'** This was right out of the Old Testament. This is to take what was given, but not to retaliate beyond that. **39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person.**

Now, it's very important to understand in this text that Jesus is not teaching passivism. This isn't a text directed toward a government saying, "Don't go at an evil nation, don't seek justice. It's not speaking of passivism. And it's not telling you don't use self-defense if someone is coming after you or your family. That's not it at all. This is Jesus speaking in hyperbole, teaching us do not retaliate. The believer does not have the spirit of retaliation, going back at a person the way they are coming at you. **If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.** Have you heard anything more difficult in your life this week than that right there?

Commentaries say, "A slap on the cheek (not a punch, but a slap) is just a little bit more than a mere insult. And when we are insulted, when we are slapped, stay standing. Don't let that knock you out. Actually, turn the other cheek. **40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. 41 If anyone forces you to go one mile...** Now think about this speaking to a Jew. In that day, the law allowed a Roman soldier to look to a Jew and say, "Drop everything that you are carrying with you right now and take my load." The law said they had to carry it for them for one mile. At the end of that one mile, you could drop it because your obligation was fulfilled.

But what does Jesus say? ***If anyone forces you to go one mile go with them two miles.*** Turn the obligation into an opportunity. Don't just do what you have to do, but go above and beyond. Scripture goes on to say, ***42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.*** Here it is ***43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*** We are reminded this morning that God has not changed the hate rule. There is no room for it in our hearts, followers of Jesus. We have to be very careful and understand what we're called to.

The bottom line is this. I don't want this for you. I don't want this for me. I don't want to become like the person insulting me. Whether that's your boss or a family member, could be a spouse. I'm not going to go back and forth because I don't want to become like that person. That person who is totally wearing you out. When you go back at them the way they're coming at you, you're becoming like them.

Proverbs 19: 11 says, ***A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.*** Stop being so easily offended where everything just takes you out and that relationship's over. I'm done with that job. I'm done with that church. I didn't like the way the person looked at me. There are a lot of servers here. Stop allowing one bad customer early in your shift to ruin the rest of the shift. Stop allowing it to take you out. Roll with the punches. Overlook the offense. Move on and continue to serve.

Here's some breaking news from this week: *Local Facebook user discovers they can simply scroll past posts they disagree with instead of leaving an essay in the comments section.* I was blown away by that. You can scroll past the potential offense. You don't have to stop and show up to every fight you're invited to. You can scroll past it. Some of you are going to be sitting next to your spouse this week, having a wonderful day. They're going to see something online and be offended and they are going to share it with you so you can be equally offended and us offended together is going to help. You're wasting your days. You are letting them live rent-free in your head. Knock it off; just walk away. Scroll past. Toss the phone in Taneycomo; whatever you need to do. Stop allowing the insults and criticism, the ridicule. Your like, "But they are offending my faith!" scroll past. You don't have to stop and match the insult with another insult. Just mark this if you're taking notes. *Primer for 2024 election* as we prepare. You don't have to show up to every fight you're invited to. And when you do have to get into a difficult conversation or you're in a conflict, you don't have to take every hit. Just roll with the punches.

2. God see's every offense and your response. Ultimately, God will deal with every offender, but he also sees your response. He sees how well we are doing with this. He is my defender, and he sees every offender. 1 Peter 2: 20 says, ***20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?*** What a question. Isn't it something. How many people have you known that have been mad at something that happened to them. And then they tell you what happened to them and you're like, "You had it coming. I hate to say it, but you're 100% to blame for that one." "Can you believe so and so said or did this to me?" "What did you do?" "Oh, okay." What is Peter saying here? It's like you can't look at that and be like, why is this unjust person coming at me.

...But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. If you continue to do the right thing, if you continue to move forward, if you continue to not match insult for insult, God sees that. He sees the offense. In this victim culture that we live in, we need to all be reminded that

you may be zero percent to blame for what happened to you, but you are 100% responsible for your healing and treatment of others. Now, I want to say here that some of you are walking around with a lot of trauma that was brought against you and it is real trauma. A friend of mine in ministry says there is bit T trauma and there is little t trauma. A lot of people take the pain and the hurt in life, and they want to call it big T trauma and everything becomes... But there is real trauma out there and some of you have been through that. You deal with anxiety, depression and all that, and we completely understand that. And we walk alongside you through that. What happened to you is not your fault, but what you do moving forward is your responsibility. There are so many cliches with this. If you don't heal, you'll end up bleeding on people who didn't cut you. If you're a victim, if you're not careful, you'll take that and you'll become the offender and you'll become the bully and you'll become the abuser. We see it online all the time. People who have been offended, people who have been hurt, people who have been traumatized, who feel now I have a right to... No, you are ultimately responsible before God for the way you treat other people, and for your healing.

I think this is important to say when we're talking about this. I think podcasts, books, therapy are good for you, but they do not qualify you to be a therapist. They do not qualify you to diagnose the trauma, the narcissism, the PTSD, whatever the case. Just the words that are thrown out there like crazy from people who read a book or listened to a podcast. You want to help a friend? Move them toward the help they need. Help them on the healing journey, but don't allow us to sit there and go, "This person is to blame and until that person does this, until that person seeks forgiveness, until that person wants to be reconciled... I have every right to do what I do. I have every right to say what I need to say." No, you are 100% responsible before God for the way you treat other people.

3. Every offense, every insult is an opportunity to grow and build your resilience. In 1 Peter 1: 6-7 speaks of all kinds of trials. Not one specific trial is mentioned, so this is speaking of the pressures, the difficulties, the testings of life. We read 1 Peter : ***6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while...*** You know what you're going through right now won't last forever? I can promise you it will not last into eternity. You're like "I'm 50; I potentially have 30 more years." I can promise you it won't last more than 30 years. That's a little while when you think about the days of our lives in the scope of eternity. What you're going through now is for a little while.

Jimmy Dodd, who was here last week, spent three hours with our staff on Monday. Jimmy Dodd, God is using that man around the country in a big way. He prayed something at the end of the day that I think is one of those prayers he probably prays often. It stuck with me, and the Lord used it. He just said this at the end of his prayer: "Lord, for the unsaved, life on this earth is as good as it gets. For the believer in Christ Jesus, this is as bad as it will ever be." I've prayed that all week. When I think about resilience through trials and pressures and tests. What you're going through now is only for a little while. ***...you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith...*** A lot of people blame the pandemic for the way they behaved. The pandemic didn't create your behavior, it revealed it. The pandemic didn't create your heart, it revealed it. What you're going through... Whatever the trial is... We went through a national, global trial three years ago and it revealed a lot. What is he saying? ***The Genuineness of your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.***

In other words, what you're going through now becomes a testimony because it's something you can share. Gary Smalley always loved to use this word picture with me when I would go through something. He'd say, "This is just raising your threshold of pain." Do you know why you have to stick out a job when you want to quit over trivial issues. Do you know why you need to keep that friendship and reconcile when it's over trivial issues. Do you know why you need to stay at a church when it's over trivial issues? Because eventually, at some point in your life, big things are going to happen. There's going to be a crisis. And if you can't handle the pain at this level and you can't bounce back and grow from the little insults and offenses that hit us in life, you won't be ready for when the big issues hit.

Gary would just say, "Right now, your threshold of pain is here. You go through something, it just raises a little bit more." That's why I love when somebody comes to me and goes, "Hey, you're never going to believe it, but they moved me up at my job to manager. Do you have anything to encourage me with?"

I'm like, "All that means is that the target on your back just got larger. I'm here to encourage you, whatever you need to move forward in your new role." But you know this. As you take on more responsibility at work and as you lead people, it just grows the target on your back. People are going to come at you. Who knows what God has planned for you 10 or 20 years from now in life for you, but I want to be prepared for it and that means I have to deal with what I'm going through right now. I need to bounce back from this right now.

4. Resilience grows every time you get up and keep moving. Something Jimmy did with our staff that I was scribbling notes as fast as I could. It was so encouraging. He just talked about the difference between competency and character. Put on a chart like this. if you think about your competency and your character. This is just a scale from one to ten. Here is the lifespan, from the teens in the room all the way up to those in the 80s. I know some of you are offended because I didn't put your age off there on the right, but we've only got a couple of them. He said, "I want you to think about what you're good at right now, your competency, your God-given abilities, your gifts, talents, and skills. Some of you are teachers, some of you are engineers, some of you are entertainers, some of you are instrumentalists, some of you are management."

He says, "Most people will start off their adult life or their career around a six or a seven. In other words, you should probably find something to do for employment or a career that you are a six or seven at." And he says, "It's just a slow build, but over the years, you work at that for 30 – 40 years..."

I love comedians. I follow comedians and I'm like 30 years later, this comedian is skilled, they've got timing down. But then I like going back and watching videos from 20 years ago. They were good, but now... That's what he's talking about right here. Here's the line for maturity. He says, "When your maturity matches your gifts, talents, and skills, that's when you begin to thrive.

This person... Whoever this person is... And it's going to be different for everyone, but this person started thriving right around retirement. Part of my issue with retirement. You're at your best. You have honed in your skills, you are incredible at whatever it is you do. Your character matches it. You are the one we need to turn. The problem is this gap. He says, "I can promise you..." This is a great illustration. Jimmy loves sports. He is a huge KU fan. He said, "You can bet that before the NFL team drafts a player, they're looking at a chart almost just like this. they're looking at the first draft pick like a

10 quarterback with a one or two on the maturity level. Aka Cleveland Browns. It's a classic example of this though. You know what they are gambling? And they truly are gambling. They are going, "This quarter back is incredible, however, can this program, can our coaches grow him up because we don't want to pay all this money for some guy that's going to flame out."

As Jimmy was sharing this... It hit me as I was preparing for this today. All these dips right here. I circled all these dips in my notes and I'm going, right there, all of those dips were major life events. I would call them knockout blows probably. Got fired from a job. Went through a divorce. A friend walked away from you and discredited you and slandered you. A leader that you loved and respected turned their back on you. You had a family member disown you.

You've met people who are 40, 50, 60... I've met people 70 or 80 years old that this line never moved much past here. But these are people who got knocked down and said, "What am I going to learn from this? How will I grow?" And every time you get knocked down, you have to make a choice. Am I going to get up? Am I going to keep moving? Or am I going to stay here because this is where the growth takes place?

Here's another line that's very important, especially in Branson. If you're looking for a mentor or a coach in whatever field that you're in, find someone in their 60's, 70's, 80's who is thriving. They are not going to be able to meet with you for long... I'm not being mean, but Ron, you need a nap, don't you? How old are you, Ron? He's 82. He's sitting down here in the front row. Ron would be about right here?

This is why I tell the 60,70,80-year-olds in our church, "You're probably at your most influential season of life. For you just to sit back and watch Fox News all day... Get out there. Be with people." Young people, at this age, you don't need coffee dates with mentors in this season of life. You need to find them down here.

Here's what the scripture says in Romans 5: 3-4, **3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character;** Yeah, there are lessons to learn from the knock down, but you know what else is also important? The getting up and the keep moving. Saying, "I'm not going to allow this to take me out." **...and character, hope.**

Just to encourage you, whatever season you're in, whatever suffering you're going through, it will be painful in the short term, it will be. I know what you're going through is extremely painful and it's difficult and it's challenging. But respond well, grow, get up, keep moving, and you'll be grateful. You'll have a story to tell in the long term.

5. Believers build resilience by considering the sufferings of Jesus. By turning our eyes off of the problem and turning them on Jesus. By not being fixed on the circumstance but being fixed on Christ. Here's what we read in Hebrews 12: 1-4, **Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses...** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of Old Testament witnesses... If you are taking notes write Hebrews 11. If you have time this week, go back to Hebrews 11 and learn about how they lived by faith. So, who lived by faith? Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses. Sometimes people read this and think this cloud of witnesses are spectators, they're looking down on us.

That's not at all what it's talking about. They're not looking down on us, they're not spectators, they are the ones who have gone before us that we can learn from. **...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.** Key here. 2 **fixing our eyes on Jesus...** The end. I'm not a basketball player. I didn't have a really great sports career in high school, but I can remember where the coach always told me to look on that basket. It didn't help me, but I know it helped a lot of other people. And the same thing with running. Don't look down at your feet. Keep your eyes fixed.

The circumstances, the race, everything going on in your life right now, it's moving constantly. It says keep your eye fixed on Jesus because he's fixed. He's never changing. **...the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** That is victory for Jesus, and that's victory to you, believer in Christ 3 **Consider him...** Now here's where it takes a turn. You need to consider what you're going through in light of what Jesus went through **...who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.** When you get up, don't get up from whatever knocked you down and begin immediately looking at all that's going on around you. You get up and keep your eyes fixed.

I have a friend going through a terrible trial right now. Everything is hitting my friend on every level. He lives in another state. People slandering him and saying all these falsehoods about him. I asked him how he was enduring all of it. I think I'd be a puddle with some of the stuff that's been said about him. He was encouraging me going through probably the most difficult trial of his life in ministry. He said, "I don't know. I just know that everything around me doesn't even feel real. And every time I look up, I just have this overwhelming peace I can't explain. So long as I stay there, I know I'm taken care of. I know the one who goes before me. He is my guard. So, whatever is said..."

I think the problem is some of you got knocked down, you got back up and you go right back to looking at what everybody is saying. No, when you get up, keep looking up. Fix your eyes on Jesus.

I was with a friend a few weeks ago, His initials are Wes Hartley. All of you in the Chapel and over in the Courtyard, and watching online, Wes is the one directing all the cameras to make sure all the video goes out. He's become a dear friend. I was sharing with Wes some of the things I've been going through. Some of it was pretty heavy stuff. And when I shared it with him, he got that smirk on his face. I went right back to Gary Smalley. I would share something deep, hurtful in my life with Gary and he'd respond with a smirk and say, "That's awesome. It's raising your threshold of pain." Wes was doing the exact same thing.

He goes, "Why is it that in Hebrews 12, we typically only read verses 1-3, but we never move on to Verse 4?" He opened his Bible and shared with me Verse 4 – **In your struggle against sin...** Your sin, but also that opposition from sinful man, just the sinful world that we live in. In your struggle against all that you're dealing with, **you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.**

And Wes says, "You haven't been martyred yet."

I can tell you this is true of every person sitting in here. You haven't shed blood yet over it, so get up and keep moving. You may get bloodied a little, keep moving.

This became a sacred echo in my life. Every time I wanted to whine or complain about something that was happening to me, I keep my eyes fixed on Jesus and understand I'm still walking I've got no dents, and I'm not bleeding.

And what the writer of Hebrews is saying here is some of you are going through very difficult trials, but you've not yet been martyred for your faith. And until that happens, keep going, keep running your race, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

Father, I do pray for each and every believer in Christ Jesus right now. Some are going through heavy, painful trials, tests, and pressures in life. And it's an overwhelming weight and they feel knocked down, and they've been staying on the ground. Our prayer today is that they are able to get up, with the help of brothers and sisters in Christ gathered around them, able to persevere and endure these trials. Let this church always be fixed on Jesus, our eyes always fixed on Jesus, the author, the finisher of our faith. May we count it joy as he counted it joy. May this be true of each and every one of us.

For the one who has never placed faith in Jesus, that today would be the day of their salvation, that they would confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord, believe in their heart that he has been raised from the dead, that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

We pray this in the authority of the good name of Jesus, and everyone agreed and said... Amen.

