

In this month's Dispatch, we reflect on hard times and how to get through them. Colorado farmer Dan Anderson kindly shares a wrenching personal story about a very hard time that took him several years to process. Bill shares a message from the Apostle Paul about hope in tough times. As usual, if you have comments or further thoughts, please let us know!

10' Tall and Bulletproof

By Dan Anderson

Back in 1982, I was a typical 17 year-old, high school senior-to-be. I felt I was 10' tall and bulletproof. Nothing could touch me, and the whole world was right in front of me. I had just gotten the license to drive our farm trucks and was hauling our wheat harvest to the elevator. I was finally moving into a more important role on the farm and was proud to be seen driving the truck.

6:00 P.M. July 26, 1982 changed all of those euphoric feelings. I changed into being a scared, lonely, introverted kid who wanted to run away and hide and never come back. Here is the story.

I had taken a load of wheat to town just before a rainstorm and had waited in town for the storm to pass. As I headed home, the roads were a muddy mess. A mile and half from home, I topped a hill to find our neighbor had pulled his stuck pickup out of the field with his combine and was standing in the middle of the slick, muddy road. I thought I would be able to stop my truck, and he had jumped to the north side of the road out of the way anyway. I was not able to stop completely, and unfortunately, he crawled back under the pickup to finish unhooking it from the combine. I struck the back corner of the pickup with the front corner of my truck. As I jumped out, I saw him lying under the pickup. I knew immediately that the impact had killed him.

That instant shaped my life. Our neighbor's wife came running to me on the side of the road, put her arm around me, and said "Frank is dead. Let's go get help". We drove away in the only option we had, the combine. I will never forget watching blood run down the muddy, rain-soaked road.

It took years for me to process all that happened over a period of time after the accident. Family and friends were there for me. I spent quite a bit of time talking with the minister at the Methodist church. All of the people in my life helped me see that what happened was truly an "accident". For a long time, I had terrible feelings that all eyes in a small community were on me. I had to relive all that happened not only during the wreck but for the days, weeks, months and years that followed.

It made me stronger in some ways and weaker in others. Our neighbor's wife actually made me sit with her and her son at the funeral. My parents and I had shown up late on purpose at my urging. She stopped the funeral and brought me forward. I realized years later that she did that for a reason. She did not blame me for what had happened and made sure that the entire crowd knew that by her actions. She did not want a young life to be ruined because of it. I have so much gratitude and respect for her.

Over the years I have tried to describe all of the feelings, and I don't know if it is possible. I do know these things, though:

- I believe God forgave me from the start, but I had to learn to forgive myself. I believe that forgiving ourselves takes time and is one of the hardest things we ever do. I still at times blame myself for what happened years ago.
- I believe that we need to let the people in our lives know that they are important to us and in our



lives because they matter. Hug your spouse, make sure you spend the extra minutes with your kids, talk to your aging parents and drink in their wisdom, spend time with friends and always take time to smell the roses. Work will always be there, but life is humbling and can change in the blink of an eye. It was hard to learn that I wasn't "10 feet tall and bulletproof".

If anyone has had similar experiences or would like to know more of what happened in my life, I am willing to share. It is not easy, but the minister always told me to let people know what happened because I may have answers to the questions that they may have.

Faith and Family Business
Tough Times According to St. Paul
II Corinthians 4:8-9
By [Dr. Bill Long](#)

Very few of us, in all likelihood, will face the kind of tough time that Dan Anderson wrote about as a raw and invincible 17 year-old. His courage to tell that story, including the comforting and assuring words and gestures he received from the widow, is one of his gifts to us. Thank you, Dan, for opening your heart to us!

Dan's story made my mind wander to one of my favorite passages from the Apostle Paul on tough times. When I re-read Paul's words, I saw how specific, precise and optimistic his thoughts were when mentioning tough times. Perhaps you know the verses:

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (II Cor 4:8-9).

I noticed for the first time that Paul breaks our varied distresses into four categories. He speaks, in order, about *pressures* we face; *perplexity* in our lives; *pursuit* of us by other forces or people; and *pounding* by repeated and unwanted assaults against us.

Pressures are plentiful, but the combination of looming deadlines, a mountain of work and conflicting responsibilities often means that we feel "slammed," with no respite in sight. *Perplexity* happens because so much information deluges us that we don't really have time to understand much of it, much less relate it to our lives. Often we have a sense of being *pursued*, by competitors, regulatory bodies, or just the inevitable forces of aging and decline. Finally, we sometimes just feel bedraggled, *pounded* and beat up, as if the entire world wants a bite of our soul and we are in no position to stop it.

In four images Paul has captured many of the tough times that come our way. These tough times certainly would have the last word in our lives—except that we notice they are always the *second to last* word for Paul. Pressed? Yes, but not crushed. Perplexed? Yes, but not fully confounded. Pursued? Yes, but not "caught." Pounded? Yes, but not pulverized. Dan Anderson would probably be the first to agree.

