

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Dealing With Difficult Times

By Chris Simmons

David is referred to, by God, in the scriptures as *“a man after My own heart”* (Acts 13:22; I Sam. 13:14). David was by no means a perfect man and, in fact, spent a good portion of his life suffering from, and dealing with, the physical consequences of his notorious sins involving Bathsheba, even though he had been forgiven by God for his transgressions. David, in Psalms 37:1-7 discusses how his relationship to God would sustain him through the challenges and difficulties of life. He identifies several characteristics that are essential to spiritual success and maintaining fellowship with Jehovah (Yahweh).

David first states that in order to endure through difficult times and receive God’s inheritance, our concern cannot be upon others, and especially those who we perceive to do wrong and yet still prosper. David said, *“do not fret because of evildoers, be not envious toward wrongdoers”* (verse 1). Later, David warns of “fretting” over the prosperity of those who do wrong, *“Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret, it leads only to evildoing”* (verses 7-8). The point is, we have to stop worrying about everyone else and simply ensure that we never stop following God. Peter, who was so concerned about the fate of his fellow apostle John after being told by Christ of what was in his future, was admonished by Jesus in John 21:22, *“if I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!”* Regardless of what happens to others, we individually bear the responsibility to follow Him, come what may! How many Christians have quit following Christ because life hasn’t treated them to what they think they deserve and are consumed with worrying about why others are blessed more, or suffer less than they do?

How then do we get through the difficult times of life? David said in verse 3, *“Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.”* We are to trust God that His way is best for us. We must believe the prophet Jeremiah who said in Jeremiah 10:23, *“I know, O LORD, that a man’s way is not in himself; nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.”* Thus, trust in the Lord necessitates that we no longer trust our own wisdom when it comes to our walk in life, our homes and marriages, and our stewardship of the Lord’s church and its work. We are to trust the Lord that His commandments are for our good (Deuteronomy 6:24; 10:13). We are to trust that the Lord is able to “guard that which I have committed unto him against that day” (II Timothy 1:12). The expression, *“cultivate faithfulness”* is interesting as it depicts great care and effort to provide for all of the needs of something we grow. The Hebrew expression actually means “to tend a flock; i.e. pasture it; intransitively, to graze” (*New Exhaustive Strong’s Numbers and Concordance & Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*). Our faith is to be cared for and nurtured as a shepherd would do so for his flock and this is done only when we display complete trust and confidence in God and His word.

We are to delight in the Lord. In verse 4 David wrote, *“Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart.”* We are commanded by Paul to *“rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice”* (Phil. 4:4; cf. 1 Thess. 5:16). We rejoice in being reconciled to God (read Col. 1:21-23 and 2 Cor. 5:18-21). We rejoice in the hope of heaven and eternally being with God one day (read Rom. 12:12 and 1 Pet. 1:3-7). To one who finds such happiness and satisfaction in God, in being reconciled with God, and to receive His blessings and promises, the promise is given that, *“He will give you the desires of your heart.”* How so? The fact that we seek our happiness and joy in Him, and from Him, will cause our requests to be for those things that are pleasing in His sight and our desires to be for only those things which God’s wisdom dictates are proper for Him to grant to us. “The fact that a child loves his father, and finds his happiness in doing his will, will do much to regulate his own ‘wishes’ or ‘desires,’ and will at the same time be a reason why the father will be disposed to comply with his requests” (*Barnes’ Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft*).

We are to commit our way to the Lord. In verse 5 David wrote, *“Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it.”* Our lives can only be pleasing to the Lord when we are fully committed and dedicated to

servicing Him. Joshua challenged the Israelites to commit one way or another, to either dedicate their lives to serving Jehovah who delivered them from captivity, or commit to serving one of the idolatrous gods of the nations around them whom they had dispossessed. In 1 Kings 18:21, Elijah later asked those in Israel, who attempted to conjoin the service and worship of Baal and God, and would not exclusively commit to God alone, **“How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.”** Strong’s Concordance defines the Hebrew word for “hesitate,” “to hop, i.e. (figuratively) skip over (or spare); by implication, to hesitate; also (literally) to limp, to dance” (*New Exhaustive Strong’s Concordance & Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*). The same Hebrew word is used in 1 Kings 18:26 to describe the prophets of Baal who **“leaped about the altar which they made.”** We may not be tempted to serve Baal today, but how long will we skip or hop between trying to serve God and trying to serve wealth, fame, power, prestige, or self? Jesus made it abundantly clear that we can not serve both (Matt. 6:24).

Commitment involves sacrifice in all manners of life. The commitment of the brethren in Corinth was evident from their willingness to give of financial means even **“beyond their ability”** to the Lord and to the needy saints in Jerusalem. But the reason they were willing to give so liberally, is because of their commitment to God in that Paul stated, **“they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God”** (2 Cor. 8:3-5). Whether our money, our time, our talents and abilities, nothing is held back from God when we have **“committed our way to the Lord.”**

Finally, David writes that we are to **“rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him”** (Psa. 37:7). Spiritual success has much to do with our ability to endure and **“wait”** through the difficult times. Again in verse 9 he writes, **“those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land.”** The Hebrew word **“rest”** in verse 7 doesn’t mean what we think of rest today. The word has nothing to do with sitting down in an easy chair and relaxing, but rather it means **“to be mute, silent, still ... hence, to be silent to anyone; that is, to listen to Him in silence ... patience ... confidence”** (*Barnes’ Notes*). Thus as we endure the difficult times of life, we do so with our eyes and ears carefully attuned to God’s word, rather than with continual complaining and murmuring. We must have faith that **“the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment”** (2 Pet. 2:9). And we must **“wait patiently”** for the time when God **“will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation”** (Rom. 2:6-8).

We can get through the difficult times of life even as David did, when we trust in the Lord, delight in the Lord, commit our way to the Lord, and rest and wait patiently for the Lord. ■

Truth Makes Christians

By Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

A perverted gospel cannot save. Jesus declared that it is the knowledge of truth, not the belief of error, that makes men free (Jn 8:32). Though a perverted gospel may have in it all the elements of the true gospel, its power to save is lost in perversion. Bread is God’s power to quell the hunger, but the admixture of a poisonous element – spoonful of arsenic, for instance, in a loaf of bread – would destroy its power. Water is God’s power to quench the thirst, but the admixture of salt will destroy the quenching power of water.

The gospel is God’s power to save the soul, but its admixture with error – the doctrines and commandments of men, when heard and believed – destroys its saving power. Hence, Paul’s alarm concerning the perverters at Galatia: **“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ”** (Gal. 1:6-7).

Error preached, error heard, and error believed cannot result in the truth obeyed. No man can accidentally obey God. The truth preached, the truth believed, and the truth obeyed makes a Christian. Nothing else does. How careful then men should be in their handling of it! ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250