

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

WHEN LIFE IS HARD

By Andy Sochor

At the beginning of his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul provided a glimpse into the difficulties he faced in his life: ***“For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life”*** (2 Cor. 1:8). Most or all of the hardships that Paul faced were due to his work in preaching the gospel.

There can be many reasons why we face hardships in life – not just for preaching as was the case with Paul. Yet even when we suffer for other reasons, these hardships can cause us to feel the same way as Paul described.

When we face hardships in life, the specific way in which we handle them depends a lot on the nature of the hardships (financial problems, personality conflicts, health issues, difficult temptations, etc.). However, there are some principles that will apply to all types of hardships. These are important to remember, especially if we are not yet sure what specific course of action we should take.

PRAYER

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

Rather than being anxious about things that are troubling us, we are to pray. Paul explained that when we do this we can gain the protection of the peace of God. Peter wrote, ***“Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you”*** (1 Pet. 5:7). This does not mean that when we pray our problems will always go away. However, as we pray to God with an attitude of ***“thanksgiving”*** (Phil. 4:6), we are reinforcing our faith and trust in Him. In Christ we have a ***“high priest”*** who can ***“sympathize with our weaknesses”*** because He was ***“tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”*** (Heb. 4:15-16).

PERSPECTIVE

“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

We need to remember that this world is temporary and cannot compare with eternal life. Knowing that this world will one day come to an end should cause us to live a certain way. Peter explained: ***“Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness... Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless”*** (2 Pet. 3:11, 14). Our lives here are ***“just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away”*** (Jas. 4:14). We must live with this understanding always as we await the greater and eternal home in heaven.

PRIORITIES

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33).

The most important things are the things of God – His kingdom and His righteousness. No matter how “important” the things of this life may seem, it is far better to have Christ. Paul wrote, ***“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing***

sing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:7-8). No matter what we gain in this life, it cannot be used to redeem our soul (Matt. 16:26). Therefore, we must prioritize those things that are spiritual and eternal.

PEERS

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:23-25).

For our purposes here, our peers are not necessarily those of the same age; instead we have something else in common – faith in Christ and the hope of heaven. It is possible for Christians to fall away, but the encouragement of brethren can help prevent this. The Hebrew writer said, *“Encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13).* However, we are not just to receive help; we are also to give help and *“stimulate one another to love and good deeds...encouraging one another” (Heb. 10:24-25).* Even if we are struggling, we can be an encouragement to others. That way, if all of us are struggling, we can all be a help to one another.

PERSEVERANCE

“And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope” (Rom. 5:3-4).

It is not easy, but sometimes we must simply persevere through tribulation. As Paul explained, this develops character and strengthens our hope. There are many things that can hinder us in this life, but we must *“run with endurance”* and focus on *“Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith” (Heb. 12:1-2).* We cannot afford to forget what is important and give up our reward. The Hebrew writer admonished, *“For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. [...] But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul” (Heb. 10:36, 39).* We need to persevere, no matter how difficult things become for us.

CONCLUSION

We have been abundantly blessed by God in this life and have many things for which we can be thankful. Even still, life is often hard; yet we cannot allow these hardships to derail our faith. So we must continue in prayer, remember that this life is only temporary, realize what is truly important, look to our fellow Christians for encouragement, and persevere until the end no matter how hard it gets.

The reward in the end will be worth it, but we must remain faithful through all of the hardships of this life. – *Plain Bible Teaching*, October 31, 2018. ■

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in hope; that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For in hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom. 8:18-25 ASV).

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

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