

Comfort In Hardship #2

Have you ever considered that your faith has a big spotlight placed on it every single time you as a Christian have to endure hardship in your life? It's true. There are many who are watching Christians to see if we are living consistent lives. They want to know if we really trust the God we claim to believe, so they want to know how we react when we are in trouble.

Fair or not, this is a reality, and our Lord recognizes that. It is for this reason that He inspired the apostles to write, "If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation ... so that many will give thanks on our behalf ..." (2 Corinthians 1:6, 11), and, "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:12). Faithful wives who have disobedient husbands — a serious burden for the wives, to be sure — are told to be subject to them ... why? So that "they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives" (1 Peter 3:1). Our conduct, how we act, especially in the face of suffering and hardship matters.

Here's a good question we should ask ourselves. What should a suffering Christian look like? For one, he should show gratitude to God. Look at Paul, who in the midst of talking about his and his fellow Christians' hardships in 2 Corinthians 2 didn't forget to be grateful to God (2 Corinthians 2:14). When he exhorted the Philippians to bring everything to God in prayer in order to get unimaginable peace in the midst of hardship, what attitude did he go out of his way to tell them to have? An attitude of thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6-7).

When we complain about our trials, all we are doing is increasing our anxieties and worries. However, when we choose to instead thank God for His goodness even in the midst of suffering, we will have more peace. Is this hard to do? Sure. Are most of us not very good at doing this? Absolutely. Most of us count our problems rather than our blessings, and by doing so we forget that God, even during the hard times, still provides us with every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). Have we forgotten that as Christians we have more spiritual blessings than we could ever enumerate (Ephesians 1:3)?

Life's difficulties remind us that we cannot make it through this life by ourselves. When we remember that and act accordingly, others will notice ... and that is one way we can open the door to bring the gospel to them. Not only that, but we should also be reminded that life is temporary, and we are strangers on this earth who have citizenship in Heaven rather than here (Philippians 3:20). The Greek word translated "citizenship" in this passage describes the homeland of an individual who has been taken into captivity in a foreign land. Such an individual would say, "Yes, I might be here as a slave against my will TEMPORARILY, but my citizenship is back in my homeland. I have my name written in a register back in my own country to prove it." This is how it is with Christians in a spiritual sense. We are here on this earth for a short visit, but our homeland is in Heaven. Our Father and our Savior are there, and our name is written there.

So we must remember that there is something better waiting for us (2 Corinthians 4:16-17). Jesus promised He would go and prepare a place of rest for us and that someday He would take us home to be with Him in this place of eternal rest (John 14:1-3). Where are our treasures — here or in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21)? We can be thankful that they are in Heaven rather than here on earth. However, as long as we are here the God of comfort will bring rest and peace to our souls as we long for that eternal home. We can rejoice in this, even while we are suffering, and especially when we realize that our joy in the midst of trouble gets the attention of others and can open doors for them to come to learn and obey the truth so they can start on that road to Heaven themselves.

I will never forget something that a friend of mine once told me: “During life, we have ups and downs. But no matter what, we have an Advocate, Jesus Christ. We must cast our cares on Him. If we have a good day, we must thank Him. If we are having a bad day, we must talk to Him about it in prayer. If you bring your troubles to God, He will find a way for you.” That’s true. That’s what God wants us to do. That’s what God promises to do. Always remember that.

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