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Daily Devotional - Monday, June 18, 2018 - When Burdens Seem Unbearable

JUNE 18TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Psalm 13:1-6

Which is more influential in your life—circumstances or your perspective? Although we may long for a pleasant life filled with abundance, comfort, and good experiences, the reality is that we live in a fallen world. Almost nothing is as it should be, but the way we perceive life's hardships and burdens depends largely on our perspective.

For example, when we are overburdened, the world might look dark even when the sun is shining. The birds may be singing, but all we hear are the sorrowful cries of our own heart. The burdens seem so overwhelming that we may even distance ourselves from others, yet that only encourages us to dwell even more on our problems and leads us further into despair.

But when we open the book of Psalms, the words penetrate our bleak circumstances, inviting us to draw near and find rest in the Lord. How gracious of Him to give us this amazing book of comfort. But greater still are the lessons we learn from it.

In today's psalm, David is weighed down with burdens. He asks, "How long?" Have you ever felt like that? He describes his troubles and pleads for an answer, but by the end of the psalm, his perspective shifts when he remembers that God is trustworthy.

If you feel as if you're bearing the weight of the world on your shoulders, stop and look up to your heavenly Father. Remember a time in the past when God carried you through hard circumstances, and rejoice in His steadfast faithfulness. He didn't fail you then, and He will not fail you now.

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Daily Devotional - Saturday, June 16, 2018 - Peace at Any Price?

JUNE 16TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Romans 12:17-21

Relationships are one of life's greatest sources of joy. Yet they can also lead to some of our biggest trials. Let's face it—we won't be able to get along with everyone, because we live in an imperfect world. Every human being has been affected by the fall and enters this life as a sinner. Furthermore, the fact that we are Christians is itself a source of conflict: Jesus tells us the world will hate us because we are His (John 15:18-20).

Despite all these obstacles, we are to try to be at peace with all men. This means we should seek to resolve conflicts and do what we can to live in harmony. Scripture gives us the following guidelines:

- Never pay back evil for evil or take your own revenge (Rom. 12:17, Rom. 12:19).
- Overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21).
- Love and pray for your enemies (Luke 6:27-28).
- Practice frequent forgiveness (Matt. 18:21-22).

These principles all run counter to human nature; therefore, the only way to successfully apply them is through the power and grace of Jesus Christ. Yet despite our best efforts, peace is not always possible. When our overtures are repeatedly rejected, ending the quest may be appropriate. Or if harmony is possible only by violating Scripture, we must refuse to compromise.

God is the only one who can change the heart of someone who refuses to be reconciled. Our responsibility is to faithfully represent Christ to that person with our words, attitudes, and behavior. The Lord's job is to produce the fruit.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, June 14, 2018 - Secure Hope

JUNE 14TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Psalm 42:1-11

God wants His children to have desires and expectations that are motivating as well as enriching. However, some disappointment is inevitable in this fallen world. So how can we determine where to place our hope—and the way to respond if it is not fulfilled?

Hope is secure when it is aligned with the Lord's desires, which are revealed in Scripture. However, many of our expectations are based on wishes or feelings. We long for job promotions, good health, or quick solutions to our problems. Though these are things we want, we have no absolute promise from the Lord that they're part of His will for us.

Disappointment with God can occur whenever our expectations do not coincide with His plan. Even when hope is based on a scriptural promise, the Lord may not fulfill it in the way or the time that we expect. We should remember that though God may appear inactive, He is moving beneath the surface, preparing us for the future.

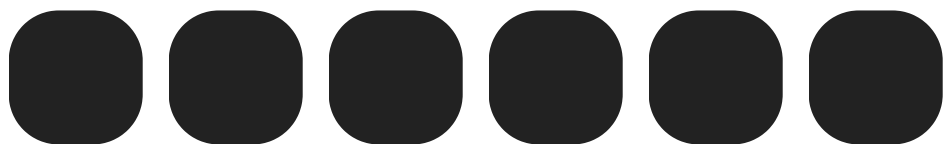
The key to contentment and joy lies in placing all our personal hopes under the umbrella of our ultimate hope in the Lord. God is sovereign and good. He always wants what is best for us and never makes a mistake. His ways are higher than ours and, in many ways, beyond human understanding.

From a limited and fallen perspective, we may be like a 5-year-old who wants candy at every meal. Sometimes God has to dash our hopes in order to give us what He knows is best. Ask Him to clarify and direct your desires to coincide with His way. Then rest in His goodness and keep your hope in Him.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, June 13, 2018 - Ignoring the Conscience

JUNE 13TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, June 13, 2018 - Ignoring the Conscience

1 Timothy 1:18-19; 1 Timothy 4:1-2

Are you making certain choices today that your conscience would not have allowed in the past? If so, you may have become desensitized. That is a dangerous place to be.

As we discussed yesterday, God gave us an internal sense of right and wrong to use along with the Holy Spirit's guidance when making daily choices. The conscience serves as an "alarm system," intervening when a Christian is about to take part in ungodly behavior. In that way, it offers protection. But sin can throw off the system's sensitivity.

The insidious process begins if we choose to disobey and then refuse to deal with our rebellion. The conscience warns us repeatedly, but it will eventually become silenced and ineffective if we persist in ignoring the distress signal. When that happens, there are no longer any signals from the heart to point us back toward godliness—in other words, the conscience has become seared.

This situation is akin to removing all traffic lights from a busy intersection: it is a recipe for disaster. If you are at this place, get on your knees and repent, immersing yourself in God's Word and bathing your life in prayer. Pursue accountability and fellowship with other believers. A healthy conscience is worth the effort.

Are your internal signals in good working order, or have they been stifled? Don't delay. Scripture warns us that we have a real enemy who desires to lure us away from godliness and into destruction. God uses a clear conscience to guide, protect, and lead us into His light and peace.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, June 12, 2018 - A Clear Conscience

JUNE 12TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Acts 24:10-16

When facing hard decisions, do you pay attention to your conscience? And is it necessarily wise to trust this inner voice?

God gave everyone an internal sense of right and wrong. In fact, reflecting His truth inwardly is one way that He reveals Himself to mankind. The conscience is a divine alarm system that warns us of oncoming danger or consequences. Its primary purpose is protection and guidance.

The problem, however, is that sin warps perception and can lead us astray. So it's important to understand the difference between following your heart and allowing a clear conscience to help with decisions. To make a determination, ask, *What is the greatest influence on my morality?* If the world's system of what is acceptable has infiltrated your heart, then your conscience cannot be trusted. But if you have allowed God's Word to permeate and transform your thinking (Rom. 12:2), that inner voice is likely trustworthy.

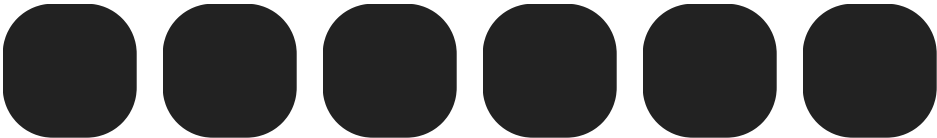
The Holy Spirit, along with a divinely informed conscience, guides believers. In order to keep that internal guidance system healthy, we should continually meditate on Scripture. The Ten Commandments are a solid basis for morality, and we are wise to internalize them—especially the two Jesus highlighted: to love God above all else and to love others (Matt. 22:36-40).

What would you say has the greatest impact on your belief system? Is it the truth of Scripture? Or do the world’s standards of right and wrong infect your heart? Almighty God knows what is best for you, His child—and He provided a conscience to guide you toward wise decisions.

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