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Daily Devotional - Thursday, June 21, 2018 - The Key to Enduring Hardship

JUNE 21ST 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, June 21, 2018 - The Key to Enduring Hardship

Genesis 50:15-21

God has given us many amazing promises in His Word. Yet, though we are assured of His steadfast love (Rom. 8:38-39), provision (2 Corinthians 9:8), and guidance (Prov. 16:9), He has not promised us an easy, trouble-free life. What we can count on, however, is that the Lord will work everything—including adversity—for our good (Rom. 8:28).

Long before Paul wrote this word of encouragement to the church at Rome, Joseph learned the same principle by experiencing its truth. His affirmation of it, however, came several years after his unfair suffering had ended. In the midst of his difficulties, it's doubtful that he understood what God was doing in his life.

The same is true for us. When our hearts and minds are agitated because of turbulent events, it's hard not to stare at circumstances in horror or confusion. But we must decide to believe what the Bible says about God's character, activity, and purposes. That choice forces our attention off the storm and onto the One responsible for ushering us safely through.

In His presence, fears dwindle and doubts dissolve; peace and a sense of oneness with the Lord will take their place. Our responsibility is to keep our eyes on God and trust His Holy Spirit to provide strength, wisdom, and courage.

Turning to the Lord will not necessarily bring an end to the hardship, but He will help us see that we are exactly where He wants us. He has a reason for the discomfort and desires that we grow in Christ through it. Whatever the situation, the safest place in the world is the center of His will.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, June 20, 2018 - Be Steadfast in Prayer

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Luke 18:1-8

While the Israelites engaged in physical combat, a spiritual battle was simultaneously being waged nearby. Scripture tells us that as Moses was praying, he grew weary in the midst of a critical situation (Ex. 17:12). If this can happen to one of God's greatest leaders, it shouldn't come as a surprise when we feel defeated or discouraged.

As battles loom, we oftentimes lose heart because our eyes are focused on the circumstances. We allow the enemy to skew our perspective of the conflict, which makes barriers before us seem unlikely to give way. Then it's not uncommon to feel panicky and wonder, *Lord, what am I going to do?* We may even stop praying because it seems apparent there's no solution, no way out, no hope of victory. We're just too tired and disappointed.

Jesus knew that we would at times feel fainthearted, which is why He told the parable of the persistent widow in today's reading. The Lord wanted to encourage His followers to be tireless in prayer. This requires faith, without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).

Let's remember that the enemy rejoices when we give up, but defeat is never our only option! If we could see the situation through God's eyes, we would see a completely different landscape. We may need to pray strenuously, as if we're tunneling through a mountain, but when we do, our faith and perseverance will grow.

So keep praying, and let the Word of God encourage you personally. You'll hear His assurance as He fights for you.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, June 19, 2018 - Look for the Good Way

JUNE 19TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, June 19, 2018 - Look for the Good Way

Jeremiah 6:16-17

If you're a hiker, you know how important it is to stick to the marked trails in unfamiliar territory. To venture off on your own could lead to disaster if you get lost and can't find your way back to safety.

This is similar to what happened to the nation of Judah. They veered from the Lord to make their own way by adopting foreign gods. As a result, God told the prophet Jeremiah to point them back to Him. Sadly, they refused to listen and continued in the wrong direction.

But we don't have to follow in their footsteps. The Lord will lead us onto His path if we'll heed these commands from Jeremiah 6:16 (NIV):

“Stand at the crossroads and look.” God sometimes uses trouble to open our eyes and let us see we're at an intersection. This is the time to stop and immerse ourselves in God's Word so we can discern His way.

“Ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is.” Saints from the past have left footprints for us to follow. After meditating on psalms or prayers offered by people in the Bible, we should ponder how their petitions reveal trust in God. It’s also helpful to notice what happened next in the scriptural accounts.

“Walk in it, and ... find rest for your souls.” With eyes firmly fixed on Jesus and with full reliance on the Holy Spirit’s strength, we can walk the road of obedience and follow Christ to sweet, soul-satisfying rest.

If you’re uncertain regarding God’s will, avoid the tendency to run faster. Pause, follow Jeremiah’s instructions, and trust the Lord to show you the good way. Then start walking.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, June 18, 2018 - When

Burdens Seem Unbearable

JUNE 18TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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

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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