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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, October 23, 2018 - Advancing Through Adversity

OCTOBER 23RD 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, October 23, 2018 - Advancing Through Adversity

2 Corinthians 4:1-18

TUESDAY

23

Adversity has a way of wearing us down, especially when the difficulty keeps going. Sometimes it feels as if we're simply moving from one problem to another without a pause in between. Although we cry out to God, the trials continue. What are we to do when we're overwhelmed and God isn't intervening?

One noteworthy trait of the apostle Paul was his determination to remain faithful to Christ through hardship. Many Christians get stuck in life's tough spots because they don't understand what God is doing. They want the Lord to rescue them from it, but oftentimes His desire is to give them "the surpassing greatness" of His power to go through the trouble (2 Corinthians 4:7).

How we respond to hardship reveals both our true character and our knowledge of God. It's easy to say, "I trust the Lord" when life is good, but unless we recognize that He is also sovereign even in adversity, our praises will soon turn to complaints and self-pity. Surrendering doesn't seem like a way to advance through hardships, yet it's essential. Otherwise, we may find ourselves resisting the Lord's good purposes.

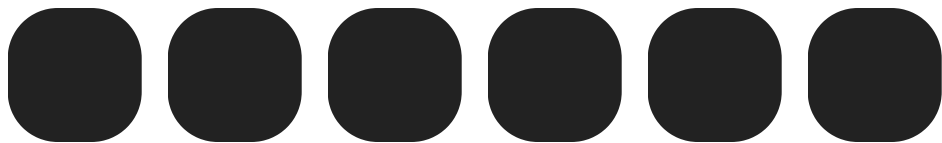
We serve a God who is worthy of our faith and confidence. Every trial is an opportunity for the light of Christ to shine through us. It's also one of the means He uses to mature our faith, conform us to the likeness of His Son, and fulfill His unique plan for our life.

When we trust in the Lord's faithfulness and sufficiency, we'll choose to focus on Him, knowing that temporary afflictions produce for us "an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

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Daily Devotional - Monday, October 22, 2018 - God's Blessing of Brokenness

OCTOBER 22ND 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Exodus 2:11-15

MONDAY

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The Lord had a great calling in mind for Moses—to free more than 2,000,000 Israelites from Egyptian bondage. And the future liberator seemed qualified for the task. As Pharaoh’s adopted grandson, he would have had access to royal privilege, power, and education.

But Moses also had a strong independent spirit that could get in the way of his obedience to the Lord. God’s plan required a broken spirit that would follow Him and rest on His divine power.

A big mistake—killing an Egyptian for beating a slave (Ex. 2:11-12)—was Moses’ opportunity to learn this important lesson. Realizing the murder had been witnessed, he fled to the desert to escape Pharaoh’s wrath. It was there that he came to the end of himself.

Like Moses, we’re all born with a tendency toward selfishness and stubbornness and want things done our way. But God gives us opportunities to bring every area of our life to Him in submission.

Though few will be given a task on the scale of Moses’, the Father has a calling in mind for each believer. Whether His plan is that we raise a godly family, reach out to a neighbor, or run a business with integrity and consideration, He wants us to do so in His power. To prepare us for this work, He sometimes uses brokenness. That wouldn’t be our chosen method, but God knows hardship is sometimes necessary to strip us of our selfish ways.

Do you want to achieve what God has planned for you to do? In humility, ask Him to bring any brokenness that He deems necessary.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, October 19, 2018 - Contagious Anger

OCTOBER 19TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, October 19, 2018 - Contagious Anger

Proverbs 22:24-25

FRIDAY

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Anger can wreak havoc on both the body and soul, but its scope extends beyond the individual and impacts everyone nearby. In this way, bitter outbursts and silent resentment are not just our own personal issues.

An angry spirit is contagious. It can pass from one person to another—and even from one generation to the next. Workplaces can become tense environments full of caustic words and attitudes. Ire turns homes into battlegrounds of verbal explosions or silent hostility. Even churches suffer from malicious gossip and fights over personal preferences.

God created us to live in fellowship with others, but anger can poison our relationships. Tragically, those closest to us are the ones who suffer the most. Children learn to respond to life's situations by observing their parents' example. They then develop similar attitudes and patterns of behavior. We need to give serious thought to what kind of heart we are passing down to our sons and daughters.

Thankfully, God is in the heart-changing business. Just as we learn an angry person's ways by association, so we can learn righteous ways by walking closely with the Lord. Christ calls us to come, learn from Him, and find rest for our souls (Matt. 11:28-29).

Which would you prefer: churning anger or Christ's peace? Both require sacrifice. To maintain anger, you forfeit healthy relationships and possibly a godly heritage for your descendants. But to acquire peace, you simply ask God to help you leave grudges, personal rights, and insults at the altar.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, October 18, 2018 - The Consequences of Anger

OCTOBER 18TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Proverbs 19:19

18

God feels anger, and He has given us this same ability. Anger is a common emotion that arises when we encounter threats, insults, injustices, or frustrations. However, because of our fallen nature, we often respond in a sinful manner when this intense feeling overwhelms us.

One sinful response is to hold on to anger until it becomes part of our character, taking up residence in our innermost being. There, it starts to twist thinking and agitate emotions. Peace and joy are noticeably absent because they can't coexist with the anxiety and frustration that accompany bitterness.

After poisoning the character, anger spills over and affects others. We might throw hurtful words like flaming arrows, even at those who weren't the cause of the rage. And then we raise shields of self-protection in an effort to avoid future hurts. But sadly, these behaviors lead to stressed relationships and isolation.

While anger can damage our character and connections with others, its most tragic consequence is broken fellowship with God. Wrath not only hinders His work in and through believers; it also grieves the Father's heart. He desires to shower His children with blessings, but angry fists cannot receive His riches of character and calling.

Are you harboring anger? It could be so deeply buried within your soul that you are unaware of its presence. Since sustained, unresolved bitterness will affect every area of your life, ask God to reveal any hidden resentment. Then release it, and take hold of the riches of Christ.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, October 17, 2018 - How to Strengthen Faith

OCTOBER 17TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, October 17, 2018 - How to Strengthen Faith

Matthew 17:14-20

WEDNESDAY

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How do you know whether your faith is strong or weak? We realize that as believers, we're supposed to trust God with every aspect of life, but circumstances may cause us to waver. This is not a new problem—five times in the book of Matthew, Jesus pointed out examples and symptoms of what He called “little faith.”

Anxiety. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addressed people who were worried about their basic needs being met (Matt. 6:25-34). He assured them of divine provision if God's kingdom was their top priority.

Fear. When a storm arose, the disciples were afraid even though the Creator of the wind and the sea was with them, asleep in the boat (Matt. 8:23-27).

Focus. As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he had faith to walk on water. But when he focused on his circumstances, he began to sink. (Matt. 14:24-33).

Forgetfulness. Despite the feeding of thousands, the disciples failed to remember Christ's past provision in their current situation (Matt. 16:5-12).

Inadequacy. Although Jesus had given His disciples authority to cast out demons, they felt inadequate and lacked divine power when faced with a particularly difficult situation (Matt. 17:14-20).

In each case, the wrong mindset resulted in a lack of confidence in Christ. Diminished faith begins not with circumstances but with our thinking and focus. Therefore, if we want to increase our trust in God, we must fill our minds with the truth of Scripture, remember our Father's faithfulness to us in the past, and look for His hand working in our present situation. When our minds are renewed, our faith will be also.

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