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“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

March 2017

No. 375

ADVERSITY

“2016 was the worst year.” I’ve heard this from several people lately. I also frequently hear, “This has been the worst day,” or, “It’s been a terrible day.” We have probably had similar thoughts cross our minds at some point. For most of the times that we think that we’ve just had the worst day of our lives, I say, “I sure hope so.” When we have these thoughts it’s often on days that the people we loved were alive when we awoke and they were alive at the end of day, we had plenty to eat, we were in fair health, and we enjoyed freedoms and luxuries many in the world will never experience. If that makes up the worst day of our life, God has given us a wonderful life.

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Somewhere along the way, our definitions of hard times and bad days have changed. Instead of “bad days” referring to adversity, loss, and hunger, today’s generation views “bad days” as not getting their way. How many times have we done this? We look back at the day, week, or year, and ignore the blessings only to focus on the times everything didn’t go as we wanted or planned or we were too busy. Because we did not get our way, nothing seemed to work out like we wanted, and we were busy, we call it “terrible.” If you asked someone today to get up at 4:00 a.m., feed chickens, tend to the cows, perform other necessary tasks for a farm, walk to a one room school house, and then come back to perform more chores on the farm, they would call that day “awful,” “terrible,” or even “torture.” A hundred years ago, that day was practically any day that ended in “y.”

Americans have become spoiled with so many of God’s blessings, many of which we take for granted. There’s no denying it. As a result we do not handle adversity well. In being spoiled we have formed the expectation that we should get our way and we should encounter no resistance in doing so. We’re surrounded by people at school, work, and family who seem shocked when they’re met with any resistance (i.e., not getting their way), and we’ve had these thoughts too. What were we expecting?

Nowhere in the scripture are we promised an easy life. We find plenty on preparing ourselves for struggles to come. Our Christian journey is on an arduous, rarely travelled path “*because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*” (Mat. 7:14). As the apostle Paul describes how a soldier of Christ is outfitted, he begins with an internal mindset of Christ’s soldier: “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*” (Eph. 6:10). We face an uphill battle, one that requires strength. However, many of us have become weak because of our struggles with...struggles.

“*If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.*” (Pro. 24:10)

As a strong, well-equipped soldier of Christ, we cannot let adversity become an obstacle. Adversity is part of life and part of our Christian life. It manifests in many ways for us: health problems, school or work problems, problems with friends, problems with family, etc. We WILL face adversity. That, we cannot avoid. We cannot control adversity. We can, however, control how we handle adversity. Paul details this matter with the Corinthians by talking about something with which the Greek people are familiar. The Olympics originated with the Greeks. In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul is using language that is specific to two Olympic sports: wrestling and racing.

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed...” (2 Cor. 4:8)

“Troubled” is translated from Strong’s Greek number 2346, meaning “to crowd.” “Distressed” comes from the Strong’s number 4729, meaning “to hem in closely.”

Here, Paul is referring to the grappling of opponents that begin a wrestling match. Their arms are locked, and each wrestler is struggling to gain an advantageous position over the other. Paul says we grapple with adversity – some obstacle, some struggle – but we will not let it gain advantage over us or throw us to the ground.

2 Corinthians 4:8 continues, *“...we are perplexed, but not in despair;”*

That is, we are unsure of the strategy needed for this opponent. What is their next move? What is their plan? Paul says we don’t know what is coming, but it doesn’t matter. We stand firm, regardless of the obstacle.

“Persecuted, but not forsaken...” (2 Cor. 4:9)

“Persecuted” is translated from Strong’s G1377, meaning “to pursue.” “Forsaken” is from Strong’s G1459, meaning “to leave behind in some place.”

Now Paul switches to racing. Racing in those times was different from how we see racing in the Olympics today. Racers did not run in neatly marked lanes, and they were actually encour-

aged to make contact to trip their competing racers, causing them to fall. Here, Paul tells us that we will not let our struggle cause us to stumble.

2 Corinthians 4:9 continues, “...cast down, but not destroyed;” Paul switches back to wrestling terms here, and it’s similar to a cliché we hear in sports quite often: “It’s not how many times you get knocked down; it’s how many times you get back up.” In this wrestling match, just because your opponent throws you to the ground, you don’t roll over and think, “Well, I guess I just better let them pin me now.” You get back up. You fight back. You never, never give up. By their very nature, obstacles and struggles can easily make us stumble. When we do, we have to get back up.

We can make it through any adversity we face. How do we know this? We’ve made it this far. We’re still alive. We’re still blessed. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul tells us that God will not put us in position to fail. We can come through each temptation and each struggle victoriously.

We have made it through adversity before, so we can make it through more.

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Php. 4:11-13)

We see Philippians 4:13 quoted often as inspiration. After everything Paul has experienced in his journeys – the death threats, the assassination attempts, the traveling, the opposition to the Word – Paul notes that he can handle all struggles, and he’s learned through this adversity that God has given him strength for any situation. Every time we struggle, it makes us stronger, preparing us for the next battle. In fact, this is one of the reasons we’re to be thankful for adversity.

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Rom. 5:3-5)

Adversity is good for us. It makes us grow as Christians. With our physical bodies, when we exercise, our muscle cells break down. It's often painful, and we're sore. However, those muscle cells then repair. They grow back stronger. When we face adversity and when we struggle, we become stronger. Paul mentions hope in Romans 5:3-5. Hope of what? A hope that there is something better beyond this world. This is to be a motivating force for us in our adversity. No, the struggle is not fun. It may not be what we wanted, but if we have faith – that hope beyond this world – it can drive us through the discomfort.

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. (Jas. 1:2-3)

Similar to Paul's message to the Romans, James tells us to appreciate the adversity we face, because it makes us grow.

In summary, we will face adversity, we will not always get our way, we will struggle, and...we will be thankful for each battle. Then, we'll be ready for the next one. However, is our first instinct to be thankful for the adversity we face, or is it to complain and wish this wasn't upon us? Do we view adversity as a burden, or an opportunity to grow?

We view our struggles and think things like, "Why me?" We often complain or wish we weren't in this situation. The answer to all of these questions we ask ourselves is, "God saw fit for it." Few, if any of us, have faced loss and struggle like Job. After Job has maintained he has done nothing to deserve his suffering, he is reminded by Elihu that God is greater than man (Job 33:12). God has a plan. God knows what is best for us. We may not understand it, but God saw fit for us to be in

this situation. God saw fit for us to fight this battle. Whether it's a struggle with our health, school, work, friends, or family, God saw fit for us to face this adversity. Like everything else in this life God has given us, it is a blessing.

Adversity helps us grow, as long as we choose to view it that way. We will struggle. It will not be fun. We will have hard times, and we may also feel despaired and discouraged. But, we must remain strong. We must remember we can overcome these obstacles because God has given us adversity in the past to prepare us for upcoming struggles. God has given us a battle we can win, and this adversity is part of God's plan that God saw fit for us. God has blessed us with too much for us to call days, weeks, and years "terrible." Even if we don't see it immediately, adversity is another one of God's blessings.

BEN

PSALMS 2

- 1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?
- 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,
- 3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.
- 4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.
- 5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, address changes and all correspondence to:

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6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

NO AUTHORITY EXCEPT FROM GOD

Psalms 2 is sending a similar message to that of Romans 13, which affirms the institution of government by asserting that *“there is no authority except from God”* (Rom. 13:1, NKJV). Psalms 2 describes how far-reaching are the implications of this truth by showing that even raging nations and rebellious kings must answer to God, the great King who reigns from Jerusalem through His appointed servant (Ps. 2:1-6).

All governmental power is derived and delegated power. Ultimately it comes from God. Human governments are visible institutions and political agents that are accountable to and limited by Him.

This encourages political leaders to bow their knee in humble worship of the Lord and to serve Him with fear (Ps. 2:10-11). In the spirit of this psalm, they can show respect to God, who has placed them in authority and stands ready to help them govern with goodness and justice.

COPIED

“No Authority Except from God,” The Word in Life Study Bible New King James Version, Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1996, pp. 912.

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
March 5 - 8	Home of Bro. Burnett Tackett Deane, KY	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)
March 24 - 26	Napoleon Woodland, AL	Edward Herren (Woodland, AL)
March 24 - 26	Gilstrap Morgantown. KY	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)
March 30 - April 2	Goochtown Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What was the name of Moses' brother?
 2. Whose name means "father of a multitude"?
 3. What was noticeable about Jacob's twin brother, Esau, at birth?
 4. What happened to Jesus forty days after his resurrection?
 5. What are the names of Lazarus' sisters?
- ...and remember last month's questions?
1. What lie was told about Naboth that led to him being stoned and Ahab taking possession of his vineyard? **HE HAD BLASPHEMED AGAINST GOD AND THE KING (1 Kings 21:10)**
 2. In which tribe was the city of Bethlehem (also called Ephrath or Ephratah)? **JUDAH (Micah 5:2)**
 3. About what age was Jesus when he was baptized? **THIRTY (Luke 3:23)**
 4. In the parable of the cloth and wine, why does no man put new wine into old bottles? **IT WILL BURST THE BOTTLES (Luke 5:37)**
 5. How many churches of Asia Minor were listed in Revelation? **SEVEN (Revelation 1:11)**