

Adversity

Adversity is the schoolmaster of life. What we do with it will determine the final outcome. It can make us or break us, or it can mold and strengthen us; it all depends on our reaction to it. If we turn inside and begin to feel sorry for ourselves and helpless, the outcome will be discouragement and depression. If we turn to God for strength to endure, the outcome will mean deeper understanding, wisdom, compassion, and the reward of peace in our heart. Adversity is like a test to see if our faith is real. It is also the resistance that causes us to grow spiritual muscle and aptitude. Adversity can be the catalyst for change.

Not every challenge we face in Christian life is adversity. Many are simply daily choices which mean choosing God's way over our way. To be honest, I do not know exactly where the dividing line is. However, I view adversity as some particular setback, misfortune, or struggle that brings hardship and discouragement. It may come in varying degrees from altering the course of our thinking to a complete changing of our lives. It can also be something besetting that we continue to face which brings difficulty and discouragement. It may be our health, financial, or social, or maybe something with our character. Perhaps this is what Apostle Paul wrote about when he considered the thorn in his flesh. *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10*

There are people who would do almost anything to avoid adversity. They overwork and bring much stress upon themselves in an effort to live above financial hardship. Yet sometime and somewhere, adversity is sure to find them. The Christian does not look for adversity, but he knows that it is meant to draw him or her closer to God, and that God will never let them down. Adversity becomes the steppingstones of life on which they ascend to a greater understanding and dependency on God.

The apostle says, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." I suppose he was addressing adversity, and hardship. He calls it temptations, which are often what assail us when we suffer adversity. We become tempted to think that God has forsaken us, or that others have mistreated us, or a host of other things related to what we are going through. The joy he is referring to is that as we deny ourselves of what our flesh wants to do, we are doing it for Christ's sake. That brings us into joyful fellowship with him. It is not a bubbly joy, but a deep peace that comes from the Lord. *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing: James 1:2-4*

I wish it were easy to surrender my will to acceptance, but my flesh wants to be in control of things. Neither do I want difficult and uncomfortable situations to deal with. During these times I must remind myself that God will never ask me to go through something that he will not give me grace to overcome. This does not always mean the removal of the struggle, but it does mean that he will supply me with the grace to remain quiet and calm. The result will be a humble surrendered heart.

I would like to believe that God does not send adversity. However, some of the Old Testament scriptures indicate that God did or was willing to do otherwise so his children would return to him. Surely, he would not willingly send adversity, but regardless whether he sends it or allows it, the sole purpose is for us to wholly lean on him. *For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth, Lamentations 3:31-34*

These thoughts have been a comfort to me as I am writing them. The struggle I have been in has seemed like adversity. As I was going through my day and thinking about my struggles, it struck me that this is adversity. It was like the Lord was wanting me to hold still and endure; he knew what I was going through. There is comfort in the fact that he has not forsaken me, and that this experience will help me in the future. I just need to trust him and follow his direction. If nothing else is learned, it is enough to know that the Lord loves me when I do not feel so good about my own performance, and that he cared enough to reach out and touch my heart. His touch alone is often all I need. It is so healing, and gentle. Oh, that I could have that same gentleness with others. It is so good to feel God's love in my heart. Makes me wish I could feel it there all the time, but then again Christian life is a walk of faith, not by sight, or feeling for that matter. I do not always feel his love and presence nearby, but by faith I am confident that he is only a prayer away. So, I take ahold of faith and grasp the promise that he will never leave me nor forsake me. *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Hebrews 13:5*

And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. Isaiah 30:20-21

The Unlikely Writer - Jeff Goertzen

5/1/2024