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August 5, 2001

Suffering, III, Seven things to see us through suffering

Over the past couple of Sundays, I have given you some reasons for suffering. All the reasons have been kind of depressing. So this Sunday, I would like to give SIX THINGS TO SEE US THROUGH SUFFERING.

As I have mentioned, *suffering* can be defined as physical or emotional pain or distress. Suffering includes putting up with unpleasant people or circumstances. Suffering includes having to endure afflictions of all kinds, including health problems.

I will not preach the first two messages again, but I will quickly review the points.

Why do we suffer, or why does God even send distressing situations our way?

First, to **ENLARGE US**. *Enlarge* here means to cause us to grow, or widen:

Second, distress teaches us that we can have a genuine and deep joy in our hearts independent of our circumstances.

Third, distresses force us to grow up and to quit acting like a baby. They force us either to Christian maturity or to quit.

Fourth, afflictions motivate us to study and rightly divide God's word. Afflictions urge us to find out what God's word has to say, or they force us to find comfort in His word.

Fifth, Afflictions force us to purify our life (as refined gold) and sift out all the chaff (unnecessary and unproductive things)

Sixth, afflictions cause us to see our sin and shortcomings and deal Scripturally with them

Seventh, afflictions strengthen our prayer life

Eight, afflictions train and equip us to counsel others who are going through similar trials

Ninth, afflictions give us boldness to spread the good news of the Gospel to those we come in contact with

Tenth, afflictions and distresses cause us to change or refocus our priorities in life in view of eternity.

Now, let me give you

SEVEN THINGS TO SEE US THROUGH TERRIBLE CIRCUMSTANCES TRIUMPHANTLY.

1) Ps 37:23-25 (WHAT DO WE SEE HERE?)

Relize that God is in control of even circumstances that **seem** to be out of control to us. Things He allows into our lives will develop our character, strengthen us, make us more compassionate to others if we yield to Him and trust him. (Rom. 28:8)

Spiritual growth is more important than physical health, material prosperity or temporal blessings. Just put your life in His hands. He knows what is best for us.

2) Pro 17:22 (WHAT DO WE SEE HERE?)

Have a joyful heart no matter what is going on in your life. I'm not happy that I have had heart problems, but I do have the joy of the Lord in my heart because I know that God can and will use my physical problems to make me better... loving, trusting, compassionate. I'm going to live every day at its total joyous capacity, twenty four hours a day enjoying God, His creation, my life for however long I have. Till the end of the year.. Or...

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Ps. 9:1-2, Ps 5:11

3) Ps 119:50

Read and study God's Word It will fill you, renew you, heal the broken heart; it will sustain; it will sustain; it will give peace; it will give answers. Read it often! It will give you the strength you need to keep going.

4) Philip. 4:6-7

Pray Talk to God often. Keep a prayer journal (like a diary) if you want to. It will become a road map through the valleys to the mountain top. It will help you realize **now** and remember **later** that the valleys do end. (Ps. 30:5b.)

5) Philip. 4:8

Keep our mind under control. Think on the Lord rather than on our distresses.

6) Philip. 2:4, Acts 20:35b

You be the encourager to others Don't require that they constantly encourage you because you are always down, discouraged and defeated. **You** set the tone. **You** set the attitude. People will love you for it, seek you out, want to be around you. That is far better than them avoiding us because we make them sad and uncomfortable.

7) Col 3:17

Stay active Go to church.

We need the fellowship of other Christians.

We need the preaching of God's word.

If we feel bad, go anyway.

Really get in touch emotionally and spiritually with your family and your friends. Talk to them.

Go places; hug anyone who will let you hug them and even a few who won't.

Kiss your kids, grand kids and even other people's kids.

Be enthusiastic, and stay busy.

Col 3:12-16

Ps 34

Col 1:11

Ps 73:26

Isa 40:29, 31

2 Cor 4:6-18

Ps 43:5

Ps 18:2

Ps 18:28-29

Deut 33:25b, 27a

Will it work. Yes. Whatever happens to me from now on, God is not only in control, but He is directing all events to produce the peace, joy and love of Christ in me.

We certainly do not have a choice in our circumstances, but we do have a choice in our attitude concerning those circumstances. We can and must choose to praise God.

Circumstances do not make us what we are; circumstances only reveal what we are.