

A Light in the Valley

June/July 2017
Volume 3
Issue 6

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Sorrowing As Those Without Hope

by: Kris Brewer

Paul, as he wrote to the brethren in Thessalonica, addressed the idea of dealing with sorrow. In particular, he wrote about the sorrow that believers feel as compared to the sorrow that unbelievers experience at the death of a loved one. While dealing with the death of a loved one is never easy, having faith in the Lord provides comfort that is not available anywhere else. Paul said:

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the

clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Paul said to “comfort one another with these words.” And, these words can provide comfort to those who believe! We can consider a couple of lessons from Paul’s words of encouragement.

Do not be ignorant... Ignorance is one of the greatest sources of fear or anxiety. Not knowing what might be in the future can certainly make a person anxious! When it comes to death, not knowing what might be waiting in store for us on the other side would instill great fear. Paul, not wanting believers to have such feelings, would inform them of what was coming. Knowing what would happen would make facing death (and the death of a loved one) much easier. Without a view to an afterlife, death would have such a finality to it that it would be very difficult to face,

even under the best of circumstances!

Do not sorrow as those who have no hope... The sorrow that is felt by a believer is far different than the sorrow that is felt by those who are unbelievers. Notice, Paul did not say that believers should not sorrow at all. That would be completely unnatural. There is a need for people to feel and express sorrow when it comes to loss in their lives. It would be completely unrealistic to expect even the most faithful of Christians to refrain from showing sorrow when they experience the loss of a dear loved one.

Perhaps the best way of considering this instruction is to think about how these two groups of people would mourn differently. The existence of hope makes all the difference in the world! Those who have no hope of something greater to come can think of nothing but the finality of death, the eternal (as far as can be comprehended without an afterlife) separation from loved ones. They believe that they will never again see those that they care about. Their loved one is nothing more than the carcass of another dead animal, put into the ground to rot away to nothingness.

However, those who have hope of something greater, an afterlife with the Creator, can mourn for the immediate loss, while still celebrating the eternal hope that they have. Paul's very next point emphasized the reason for the hope that the believer has!

If we believe that Jesus died and rose again... The hope that believers have is based in the faith that Jesus was raised from the dead. If Jesus was raised from the dead, then we can have confidence that we too will one day be raised from the dead. Paul made this point to the Corinthians when he wrote his first letter to them:

Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the

resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:12–22).

By looking at the evidence of the resurrection, we can have confidence that Jesus rose from the dead. Having been raised, He stands as the precursor for all the rest of God’s faithful who will also be raised to a glorious reward!

There are many who have yet to come to faith in Christ Jesus who simply cannot understand the way that a believer mourns the faithful dead. They are unable to let go of their dear loved ones because they cannot comprehend the resurrection of the dead. They simply cannot overcome their loss, as they believe that there is no way that they will ever have an opportunity to see these loved ones again. This is one reason that Paul described the peace that comes in Christ in this manner:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6–7).

This faith produces a peace that “surpasses all understanding.” To the carnal mind, it makes no sense to not be devastated by losing a loved one. But, to the spiritual mind, accepting that death is not the end makes mourning that much easier. It should be noted that we are not saying that such mourning is easy. It is, however, different, and in many ways easier, than the mourning of those who have no hope.

Examining these thoughts should make us evaluate our own faith. When we are incapable of letting those who are faithful go, and recognizing that we (and they) have far more ahead of them than behind, are we really showing the kind of faith that God would have us to show? Sometimes our actions may be based in selfishness (which can certainly be understood, especially in some circumstances.) But, often our actions are a reflection of a lack of faith in the resurrection of Christ, and in God’s power to raise up our dear loved ones in the last day!

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

Confidence in God

by: Justin Brewer

When faced with difficult times, some who believe in God are tempted to place the blame for their circumstances on God. This happens in our contemporary society; when a tragedy occurs, people often question how God could allow it to happen. Or if our life is not going as well as we hoped it would, somehow it becomes God's fault. Even some Christians lose faith in God in such times or are tempted to do so.

Reading through the book of Jeremiah accentuates this point; while there is obviously a different covenant in place during this time, God built the consequences for disobedience into the covenant alongside the obvious rewards for obedience. From God's answers to the people of Judah, it is clear that many were questioning God's fairness and justice; as though in a trial, God instructed the people of Judah to present their evidence of where He had done them wrong. In the end, God placed the blame for their circumstances (their fall to the Babylonian Empire and all that goes with that) at their own feet because of their own wickedness. They had transgressed the covenant, not God.

Yesterday, while completing our daily Bible reading, we came across Acts 27:13-38. This passage catches my eye every time that I read it because of the example the Apostle Paul sets for us! In this passage, Paul was a prisoner on board a ship that was in the midst of a severe storm; the storm was so severe that those on board, Paul included, had not eaten in fourteen days (27:33). In this, Paul could easily have lost faith and hoped that those holding him prisoner would be killed by the storm. However, Paul spent his time showing faith in God (27:21-26) and saving the lives of those who held him prisoner (27:31-32). In the midst of all of this chaos and some of the worst possible circumstances, Paul urged the people on board to eat (27:33-34).

The section of this passage that catches my eye, however, is when Paul "took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat" (27:35). What was he thanking God for? His plight of being a prisoner? The storm? The soldiers? He was thanking God for having provided for him. Can you imagine the profound impact this had to have had on those around him? Can you imagine what the soldiers were thinking as Paul never gave up his faith in God through all of these trying circumstances?

Rather than having the attitude of the people of Judah and seeking to place blame on God, our own attitude should always fit with that of Paul. Life will not always be easy and we will face difficult times of varying magnitude, but we can all learn from the example(s) of Paul. His example in this passage should give us confidence in the abilities of God!

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*And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?
I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.
Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if there is any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.*

There are many things we can glean from this passage:

- God knows everything. No matter what struggles we face or anxieties we may have, God knows. Sometimes it is easy to dwell on negative thoughts and feel like we are the only ones facing a particular problem. That simply isn't so, because God knows all and sees all.
- God is everywhere. There is nowhere we can go that can escape the presence of God.
- God made everything. He created everything from nothing. We cannot even begin to fathom how he did so, and anything we as humans are able to accomplish on this earth pales in comparison to what God is capable of.
- God's thoughts are not ours. Sometimes we struggle to understand why things happen or why things "go wrong," but we can ease our minds by relying on the Lord to know what is best for us.

This life of ours can be hard sometimes. Indescribably hard, and sometimes it can feel like there is nothing that can be said or done to help us feel better. It is at times like this that we need to turn to the scriptures and the one and only thing that can help anchor our faith and guide us through the storm – the everlasting, all-knowing, all-powerful and ever-present Lord of all.

Special note...

We were unable to get a bulletin out for the month of June, so this is a dual issue for both June and July. Please take note that there are two reading plans present to keep on schedule through July and August. We apologize for the tardiness of the July schedule!

Our Greatest Encouragement

Ladies

Corner

by: Laura Brewer

We all need encouragement at certain points in our lives. Most often we turn to friends and family to help lift our spirits. There is a special kind of power in a hug from a loved one, or in the words scribbled on a greeting card that can help us feel better. While these things are absolutely beneficial in overcoming the struggles we might face in our physical lives, there is only one thing that can undoubtedly lift our spirits – the nature of the Lord. When I need encouragement, my go-to passage is Psalm 139.

*O LORD, You have searched me and known me.
You know my sitting down and my rising up;
You understand my thought afar off.
You comprehend my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word on my tongue,
But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.
You have hedged me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend into heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there Your hand shall lead me,
And Your right hand shall hold me.
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me,"
Even the night shall be light about me;
Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day;
The darkness and the light are both alike to You.
For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.
I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well.*

*My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When as yet there were none of them.
How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!
If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;
When I awake, I am still with You.
Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God!
Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men.*

*For they speak against You wickedly;
Your enemies take Your name in vain.
Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You?*

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Daily Bible Reading (July)

July 2017

| | | | |
|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------------|
| July 3 | Galatians 1 | July 18 | Philippians 1:19-2:11 |
| July 4 | Galatians 2:1-3:14 | July 19 | Philippians 2:12-3:11 |
| July 5 | Galatians 3:15-4:20 | July 20 | Philippians 3:12-4:23 |
| July 6 | Galatians 4:21-5:15 | July 21 | Colossians 1:1-23 |
| July 7 | Galatians 5:16-6:18 | July 24 | Colossians 1:24-2:15 |
| July 10 | Ephesians 1 | July 25 | Colossians 2:16-3:17 |
| July 11 | Ephesians 2 | July 26 | Colossians 3:18-4:18 |
| July 12 | Ephesians 3:1-4:16 | July 27 | 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:16 |
| July 13 | Ephesians 4:17-5:21 | July 28 | 1 Thessalonians 2:17-4:18 |
| July 14 | Ephesians 5:22-6:24 | July 31 | 1 Thessalonians 5 |
| July 17 | Philippians 1:1-18 | | |

Daily Bible Reading (August)

August 2017

August 1 2 Thessalonians 1-2
August 2 2 Thessalonians 3
August 3 1 Timothy 1-2
August 4 1 Timothy 3-4
August 7 1 Timothy 5:1-6:2
August 8 1 Timothy 6:3-21
August 9 2 Timothy 1-2
August 10 2 Timothy 3
August 11 2 Timothy 4
August 14 Titus 1-3
August 15 Philemon
August 16 Galatians 1

August 17 Galatians 2:1-3:9
August 18 Galatians 3:10-29
August 21 Galatians 4
August 22 Galatians 5
August 23 Galatians 6
August 24 Ephesians 1:1-2:10
August 25 Ephesians 2:11-3:21
August 28 Ephesians 4
August 29 Ephesians 5
August 30 Ephesians 6
August 31 Philippians 1

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