

A Light in the Valley

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

The God of All Comfort

by: Bryan Gibson

What do you do when you're like Paul—when you're filled with anxiety for the souls of others; when you're burdened beyond measure, almost to the point of death; when you're troubled on every side, persecuted, and struck down; when you suffer stripes and imprisonments, tumults and sleeplessness; when you're cold and naked, hungry and thirsty; when you're attacked by false brethren; when things are so bad that you have no rest in your spirit and anguish in your heart (2 Corinthians 1:8; 2:1-4, 12-13; 4:8-9; 6:4-5; 7:5; 11:23-28)?

That's enough to make anyone "lose heart," but Paul didn't (2 Corinthians 4:1, 16). In fact, he offered this perspective on all his troubles: "We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

So what was it that kept Paul going,

kept him from losing heart? The same thing that keeps us all going—the comfort which God alone can provide. And did Paul ever receive it: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3-7, ESV).

But exactly how did God comfort Paul? We may not know all the means God used, but we do know some, and they're revealed in the first seven chapters of

this same epistle. Let's see how God did it, because it will help us understand how he comforts us, too.

By the coming of Titus, at just the right time. “Our bodies had no rest...we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus” (7:5-6). Wonder how many times we've had a faithful brother (or sister) come (or call, text, email, etc.) at just the right time?

By the love and encouragement of brethren. When Titus came, he brought comforting words concerning the Corinthians—that they still had affection for Paul, but more importantly, that efforts to lead them to repentance had been successful (7:7-12). Their obedience was a great source of joy and comfort to Paul (7:13-16), not to mention the prayers they offered on his behalf (1:11). Sound familiar? Let's not grieve so long over the unfaithful (12:20-21) that we can't find comfort in the faithful.

By giving him the opportunity to preach the glorious gospel of Christ. “Therefore, since we have this ministry...we do not lose heart” (4:1). And what an opportunity preaching provides—to diffuse the “fragrance of His knowledge in every place” (2:14), to reconcile men to God through Jesus Christ (5:18-21), to transform people into the image of Christ” (3:18), and to give them the hope of one day being “present with the Lord” (5:8). How comforting it is to know that whatever we suffer for preaching the gospel is absolutely worth it (1:6; 4:11-15; 6:10).

By teaching him the love of Christ. “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). If the love of Christ and the purpose it gives our life can't keep us going, we've got a serious heart problem.

By offering him the hope of eternal life. “Therefore we do not lose heart...for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). That's what suffering looks like—“light” and “but for a moment”—when you look through the lens of eternity.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Faith...Our Perspective...

by: Kris Brewer

The inspired writer of the epistle to the Hebrews used chapter 11 as a role call of men and women of faith throughout the Old Testament covenant. After summarizing these biblical characters' displays of faith up through the time of Abraham, he took a brief pause to talk about the type of perspective that they had. It is a similar perspective to what we too should have:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them (Hebrews 11:13–16).

Those characters of old lived a faithful life before God, even though they never had the blessing of getting to see the coming Messiah, the hope of their faith in God. Later, the inspired writer revealed:

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us (Hebrews 11:39–40).

They had the proper perspective. They were looking for something greater than what they had. They were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Having this long-term perspective molded the way that they lived their lives. They did not live like they had to grasp on to every moment of life here. They did not fail to live a godly life because there was some threat to their wellbeing, because they knew they were living for a different kingdom.

The danger was that they might begin to think about the “country from which they had come out...” If they began to think about places they had been, and had become attached to those thoughts, it would be easy for them to return. The writer had just been discussing Abraham, who had left his homeland to go where God had directed him to go. How easy would it have been for him to return home when things got difficult, if he allowed himself to dwell on what was left behind? A good example of this was also expressed by the Hebrew writer in the Israelites who came out of the

land of Egypt. Back in chapters 3 and 4, we were reminded that these Israelites refused to enter into the Promised Land because of their unbelief. That unbelief was exposed in other ways as they traveled in the wilderness for 40 years. They complained against Moses and Aaron, and bemoaned their leaving of the land of Egypt:

Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" (Numbers 11:4–6)

Their perception of what they had left behind was obviously flawed, and yet that was where they focused their minds. They could only remember the good things, not the negative.

While we might not be thinking about a physical land that we have left behind, we can certainly be susceptible to allowing our minds to wander back to the land that we have left behind spiritually. There are many who have begun to follow the Lord, who then end up falling away because they "called to mind that country from which they had come out." They had come out of the land of worldliness and sin, but then they were drawn back into it because they began to think about and focus on those things that had been left behind. Instead of being pilgrims in this land, looking forward to a better land, they are reestablished as citizens of the kingdom of this world.

Our focus has to be on what lies ahead, not on what has been left behind. Paul said it this way:

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13–14).

This perspective is what allowed even Jesus to overcome what He had to go through to fulfill His responsibilities in the plan devised for the salvation of man:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Jesus was looking ahead, not behind. He was focused on what was coming, not what was. If we want to hold steadfast until the end, then we must do the same thing, and have the same attitude. We are not citizens here, but citizens in Heaven. Our choices and our actions have to be a reflection of that attitude.

What did this mean for the faithful of old? It meant that they suffered some pretty devastating circumstances. They were killed, they were persecuted, they were abused. None of this changed their determination to do what God had commanded of them. The whole context of Hebrews chapter 11 is that these men and women did what God commanded them to do. Their willingness to do so, even in the face of personal harm, identified their faith. Had they chosen to disobey the instructions of the Lord, they would not be recognized for their faith!

What does this mean for us? We need to emulate the men and women of faith found in Hebrews 11. They serve as our example. We need to look at life here as a pilgrimage. We don't live for the "here and now," but rather for what God has offered us in the future. If we remain faithful "unto death" (Revelation 2:10), then we have a home in Heaven waiting for us! We can trust that God is going to fulfill His promise to us. So, let us set our focus on Heaven, that eternal city that God has prepared for those who love and serve Him. We need to have an eternal perspective on this life, not a temporal one. We must look forward, not backward. Let us not allow what we had in our past lives drag us away from the eternal reward that God has so graciously prepared for us. Let us not follow the example of the Israelites and fall short of the Promised Land.

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it (Hebrews 4:1).

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience (Hebrews 4:11).

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!

But He Never Enlisted...

by: Sewell Hall

He served in the army but ... “he wasn’t a soldier.” We believe there is a lesson in the following Associated Press report: “An Army spokesman said Friday that 15 year old Walter Les Martin is not recognized as a soldier—despite two periods of serving in Vietnam, because he did not enlist, was not drafted and did not enter the army through any regular means.

“He was not officially in, did not officially enlist or enter through any normal means,” Barrante said. “He was, in fact, not a soldier.”

Two periods of service in Vietnam, twice wounded in action; yet no purple hearts, no honorable discharge, no veterans benefits; he did not legally enlist.

This reminds us of a host of men and women whom we have observed serving among the soldiers in the army of the Lord. They serve faithfully and even sacrificially. They reject the sins of the flesh and live a pure life. They attend services regularly, give liberally of their money, and are ready unto every good work. They often study the Scriptures, defend the truth and attack error. Often they are outstanding in their performance as soldiers, except that they never enlisted.

The “Captain of our salvation” knew in advance there would be such individuals. He warned in advance of the fate they may expect: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt.7:22,23). What a pity to spend a lifetime enduring “hardships as a good soldier” only to miss the veteran’s benefits because of a failure to enlist.

There was no way that the young man described above could have legally enlisted, he was ineligible. But anyone who is a sinner can enlist in the army of the Lord if he is willing to leave his sins. The conditions are simple: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mk.16:16). “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Ac.2:38).

Should Mom & Dad's Beliefs Keep Me From Changing My Views?

by: Roy Fenner

There was once a man who operated a general store. On his counter top he had nailed a yardstick. He measured yard goods, rope, etc. by that yardstick. Eventually, the man died and his son moved back and took over the operation of the little store. One day, an employee of the Dept. of Weights and Measures came by, examined his "yardstick" and pronounced it a full inch less than a yard in length. All those years the gentleman had honestly thought that his measuring stick was accurate, but he was wrong. His honesty did not make him right.

Now the son was faced with a decision. He could refuse to admit his father was wrong and, therefore, be wrong himself - or he could say, "My father honestly thought he was right. I know something my father did not know. If I do not live up to the knowledge I have I will not be as honest as he was." (No doubt, most people would make the second decision.)

Strange as it may seem, many reason differently in religion. Some learn "the way of God more accurately" than their parents. However, they refuse to make any changes because they fear any change from their parents' religion would cast upon the father and mother an unfavorable reflection.

Let us say that a man's God-fearing parents taught him to reverence the Bible. Yet they were misinformed on some vital points. His parents were honest. If they had understood the truth as he does, would they not have obeyed it? If he turns his back on recognized Bible truth, is he as honest as they were?

The apostle Paul was one who had to make this decision. In Galatians 1:11-14, we find Paul's life before Christianity was one of a Jew, which his parents had taught him. He advanced greatly in that religion and was very zealous in teaching what he believed to be the truth. But in Galatians 1:15-17, when Paul was taught that what he believed was wrong, he changed and began to preach the truth.

Paul did not (as many do today) say, "My parents have been Jews all their lives and so have I, and I will die a Jew" or "If that is true, then that means my parents are lost." Just because we may have been something religiously does not make that religion right, and just because my parents believed a certain way about the Bible does not make it so. Paul was honest and sincere enough to change his life and live right. We need to constantly compare our beliefs with the Bible. Are we as honest as Paul was?

Daily Bible Reading

April 2020

April 1	Hebrews 1	April 16	Hebrews 9:11-22
April 2	Hebrews 2:1-9	April 17	Hebrews 9:23-10:10
April 3	Hebrews 2:10-3:6	April 20	Hebrews 10:11-25
April 6	Hebrews 3:7-19	April 21	Hebrews 10:26-39
April 7	Hebrews 4	April 22	Hebrews 11:1-12
April 8	Hebrews 5	April 23	Hebrews 11:13-22
April 9	Hebrews 6:1-12	April 24	Hebrews 11:23-40
April 10	Hebrews 6:13-7:10	April 27	Hebrews 12:1-11
April 13	Hebrews 7:11-28	April 28	Hebrews 12:12-24
April 14	Hebrews 8	April 29	Hebrews 12:25-13:6
April 15	Hebrews 9:1-10	April 30	Hebrews 13:7-25

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