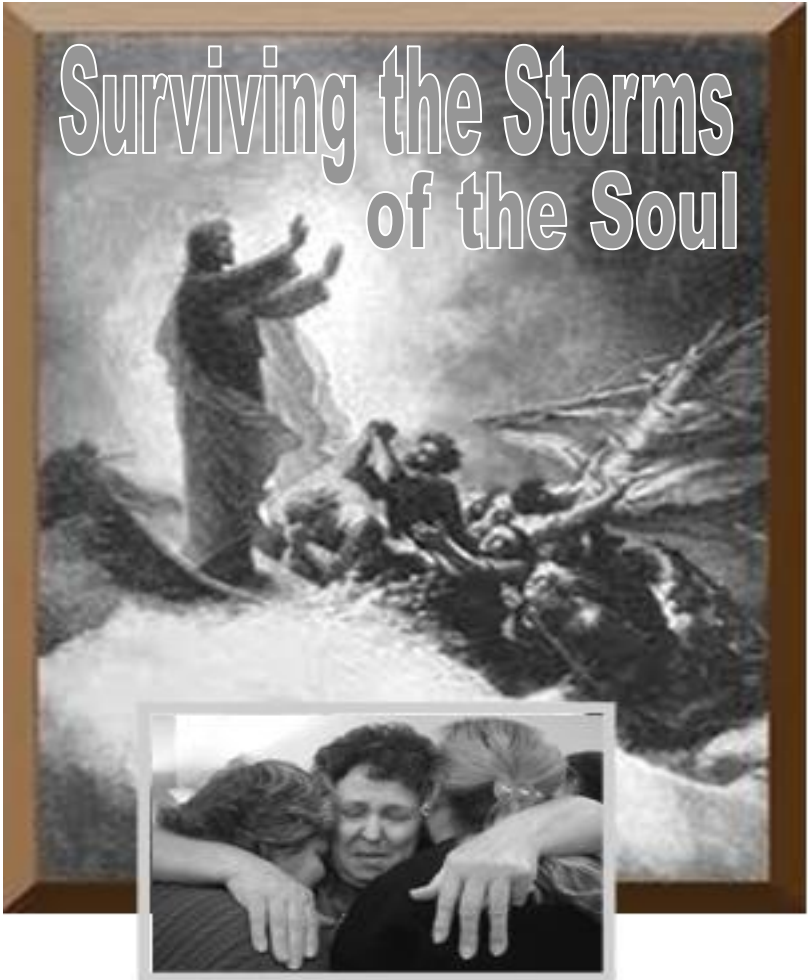


“Surviving the Storms of the Soul”

The Presence of God For the Troubled Soul



July-September 2011 Series From the Pulpit Ministry at
Christ E Free Church of Saegertown Pa

Jesus Christ
Our Highest Calling,
Our Greatest Purpose,
Our Soul's Source and Joy
And Our All-Consuming Passion.

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is not merely for the one who is suffering. This is also addressed to the community of believers as a whole. This is not directed only to those who are experiencing the storms of life, but for those who are in the boats around the one who is struggling to survive their storm.

For everyone who finds themselves struggling, there are others who have struggled and are in position, and I believe strategically and carefully placed there by God, to offer care and help to those in times of “soul trouble”.



While many may perceive themselves as struggling all alone, few actually are alone. We may perceive that there is no one around for us to cling to as we are going down, but there are others who may be able to help.

Sometimes we isolate ourselves by choosing to remain solitary, choosing to remain distant in our relationships with others. Some even avoid church, where so much of God’s help resides, simply because we do not want anyone else to know our struggles or to be bothered with *my* problems.

I recall watching the interchange between two suffering saints. One’s pain and grief was very raw and recent. Darkness had filled her soul and purged out all peace and joy and things seemed to be getting worse. She seemed bent on pushing everyone else away with her own interpretation of what she was going through.

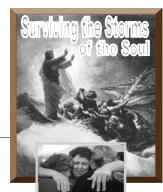
Another sister in the Lord, gently approached this grieving woman, attempting to come along side with personal support and encouragement. The first woman, shouted “*You don’t know what I’m going through*”. The second woman did not explain herself, but only quietly remained available for the grieving woman’s passion to lessen. She did not explain herself or her background, but she herself had experienced all of what this troubled woman was experiencing, and even more.

There is something oddly compelling, about entertaining the thought that “I am all alone”. For some, this idea makes their pain worse, while gaining a perceived increase of compassion from others around them. Unfortunately this does not improve matters. It only serves to push others away, making the present pain more excruciating and causing the person to become more resilient to the attempts of those around them to express genuine care and carry out the needed “rescue”.

We connect with no one. We share with no one.

And as a result we perceive we have no one to help. If only we could look around the storm. If only we could just see past the waves and into the darkness and catch a glimpse of the helpers all around us who are equipped to offer the help we need. It may not be the help we had expected, but it may be there.

If you need help today, I urge you to look around you. See if there isn’t someone you might share with. Test the waters. Risk sharing. Make a new friend.



“Storms and Anchors”

July 10 & 17, 2011

INTRODUCTION

We begin our series with some reflections on storms in general and how God’s word helps us in Surviving the storms.

Next week we will get more into the focus on individual storms of the soul, such as anger, pain, fear, discouragement, regret, discontent.

*Storms are a part of everyone’s everyday life.
– No one is exempt from storms.*

Some weather the storms, better than others. Some survive by standing firm and refusing to be conquered by the storms. Some seem to resign themselves to the storm and they begin sinking, before the winds even begin to blow.

Some are simply better at covering up their storms than others, so that when we look at others –so that from our perceptive - they seem to have no storms, or if they do, we perceive their storms are of little consequence in comparison to our perception of our own. When that happens – then we begin to develop the mindset - ”No one has it as bad as I do”. “Why Me?”, as though to think we have troubles when others do not. This leads to a very unfortunate development in our struggle with the storms, because others who have problems and are experiencing storms – who themselves may need help – perhaps our help – but alas, all we have come to focus so much on is our own troubles – our own storms -our own misfortune and the world is shut out – our perspective becomes profoundly disfigured and by our own making, our storms become magnified from a squall into a tempest – not in reality, but because of our self-focused misunderstanding that we are the only ones with hardships.

The Mark 4:36 Principle: *Look for others in the water with us.*

We are seldom truly alone in our struggles and storms.

Mar 4:35-38 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." (36) And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. **And other boats were with him.** (37) And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. (38) But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (39) And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. (40) He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"

- 1) they were all in the same boat.
- 2) there were other boats in the same storm.
- 3) They had Jesus with them.

“The Master of the Wind”, The Hemphills

My boat of life sails on a troubled sea,

Whenever there's a wind in my sail.

But I have a friend who watches over me,

When the breeze turns into a gale.

CHORUS: I know the Master of the wind,

I know the Maker of the rain.

He can calm a storm, make the sun shine again.

I know the Master of the wind.

You have a Master of the wind who is Lord over all the storms of life and His name is Jesus. He loves you and He is always available to you, if you are willing to call to Him.

When the storms floods rise

Isa 43:1-3 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. (2) When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. (3) For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.

Good Navigation

Surviving the Storms of the Soul will be determined by our own personal ability to Navigate the Storms. All I know about storms at sea is what I've read or heard tell about. But as I understand it, sailors began to develop a system of utilizing the stars as a form of navigating during the night. It was in the darkness of night that they could tell their true heading, even better than during the daylight. They used the **North Star** as an immovable, unchanging, dependable reference point.

Later came the compass, so that even in cloudy nights and overcast days, their course could remain steady, as they followed the compass. Without some form of navigation which keeps our direction true and steady – there is a strong likelihood that we will end up shipwrecked.

As I have discovered, Storms bother us most, when we are least familiar with finding our way in the dark. Storms have a more frightening effect when we are unskilled in Biblical navigation.

The more storms we are able to safely and successfully navigate through, the more experienced we become and the more resilient to the threat and fear of the storm. And the more difficult the storms we are able to weather, the more confidence we develop in our navigational resources, such as the stars, our instruments, our maps and our compass.

Storms bother us most, when we attempt to withstand the wind and waves alone. God has provided the church, a Christian community with fellowship, where accountability and trust can still be found. Among other truly caring people, we can still experience trusting, sharing, growing and healing relationships.

No seasoned navigator experiences a storm, then goes home angry that a storm dared to rock his boat. It's the nature of the business.

But with each storm, the navigator develops a new appreciation for his/her navigational helps – maps, a compass, instruments, stars, even the path of the sun. For us, *Surviving the Storms of the Soul*, means either we eventually learn to navigate the storms or we risk being shipwrecked.

STORMS DISPLAY THE GLORY OF GOD

God's Presence is Displayed in His Creation. Weather is part of God's creation and In the storm, God displays His presence and His power. We appreciate a refreshing rain, but curse the flood. We thank God for the light of the sun, but complain about its scorching heat.

The truth is, we stand in awe at a beautiful sunset, as well as at the devastation of a terrible tornado.

The Voice of the Lord in the Storm

<p>Psa 29:1-11 A Psalm of David. Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. (2) Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor</p>
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of holiness. (3) The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters. (4) The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. (5) The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. (6) He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. (7) The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire. (8) The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. (9) The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, "Glory!" (10) The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever. (11) May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!

Storms of the Soul, display the awesome presence and power of God

1) v. 3, - the voice of the Lord - the God of glory thunders

2) v.4 – the voice of the Lord is powerful, full of majesty – v.5) breaks the cedars

3) v.7 – voice of the Lord flashes flames of fire

v.8 – voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness – He speaks and He strips the forests bare.

With the word of God all creation comes into existence. -- Gen. 1

With the word of God all creation is sustained. – Heb. 1:3

Heb 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

IN a storm, we see a limited manifestation of the same power that brought creation into being.

Job 2:10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

That same power that rules the universe, also rules the storms of our own personal lives. In the hand of God, the storm also displays His awesome presence and power in the lives of those who are attempting to navigate.

The One who is the Creator of the storm is the only One who can bring us through the storm. It is not the storm itself which brings ultimate glory to God, but the dependence of His people in Him while in the midst of the storm.

It is not desperate circumstances themselves in which God is glorified, but in the acknowledged weakness of His children and our confident assurance in His ability to help and sustain us through those storms.

If we fail to Give God glory, and acknowledge our need for His help, then God intends us to learn will, most likely, come with another storm. Because it is not our comfort or the desires of our heart that is most important to God, it is our confidence in Him as our source of hope and joy.

Sometime God calms the storms, other times He calms His child, while protecting – keeping – sustaining – providing – and helping.

Sometimes He Calms The Storm, by Scott Krippayne

All who sail the sea of faith, Find out before too long
How quickly blue skies can grow dark,
And gentle winds grow strong

Suddenly fear is like white water, Pounding on the soul.

Still we sail on knowing, that our Lord is in control

[chorus]

Sometimes He calms the storm, With a whispered "Peace be still"
He can settle any sea, But it doesn't mean He will
Sometimes He holds us close,
And lets the wind and waves go wild
Sometimes He calms the storm,
And other times He calms His child

The Storms of the Soul, display the awesome presence and power of God – either in the storm itself or in His awesome power and gentle presence as He keeps us through it.

SECURITY IN THE STORMS AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

God's Control is Demonstrated in the Storms. If God creates the storms of life, then He also controls the storms of life – both physical and personal– i.e.in nature and in the human soul.

If God created the storm, he controls the storm.

" v.10 The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.

Some rejoice in being stronger than any storm. "This doesn't bother me." "This won't stop me." "I don't need God." "I don't need anybody!"

And yet it is through the storms they face alone, anger, hardness and bitterness consumes them. The harder the storm, the harder the human spirit seems to grow – more calloused and more

Some rejoice in being defeated by the storm. "My situation is so terrible." "I have it worse than anyone else." "No one knows what I'm going through or how I feel."

Dr Phil. (Oprah) Some people remain in overwhelming and life defeating circumstances because there is something about it they like. Otherwise, they would get out, if they could.

Most experience and survive the storms of the soul. However, some survive and yet they never leave the boat. They remain in the boat, re-living each and every wave, re-counting every single raindrop

– rewinding the experience and playing it over and over again – feeding whatever it is that is controlling them.

---- Sometimes because they are controlled by anger and bitterness, other times it is a result of being consumed with self-pity and self-focus attention – telling themselves “no body knows what I’m going through”.

Some protect the attitude that “nobody knows the storms I experiencing”, and in doing so, the seasick feeling never leaves them. They never get out of the boat, and never realize its all over – they’re out of the storm for now and by the grace of God - they have survived.

Experiment: The next time something unpleasant of unfortunate happens to you, pay attention to the people you tell the story to.

Inevitably, when you are telling the story of your hardship – you know what will happen?? You stop for a breath and the person you are telling your story to, begins telling you their story and make it sound just as bad if not worse than what you went through.

Why??? Because, It is human nature!! There is something strangely pleasurable about storms and hardship. We pout, we gloat, we re-hash, re-live, re-wind and re-play, over and over again – each time the details become more deeply engrained, more enhanced, and in some strange way – more pleasurable.

For some strange reason, we like telling fish stories and experiences of personal hardship. We need to remember, that God created the storm, he controls the storm.

CONTROL AND PURPOSE

If God Controls the Storm, He has a Purpose in it. The Will of God in the purposes of His people is often revealed through difficulties. God's will is often performed in the Storms.

If God creates the Storms, then we must begin to rest in the Purposes of our Storms

If God creates the storms, then He controls the storms. If God controls the storm, then He has a purpose for the storm.

Ps. 29 (1)Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. (2) Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness

Storms seem most often personal tests of faith

- to test our heart and motives
- To exercise and Strengthen our faith
- To display our faith in Gods grace in all circumstances

Jonah

Most of us are familiar with the story of Jonah and His storm of testing. His storm and test was purposed to bring about repentance.

In Jonah's situation, God's purpose in the storm was to bring Jonah to repentance and to get him to where God wanted him to be and to get him to do what He wanted him to do. If Jonah had been obedient, the storm would never have occurred. And think of the headache and hardship Jonah's disobedience and storm had on those who were in the boat with him.

Just because you are experiencing a storm, *does not* mean you have been disobedient. However, to ignore that as a possibility, may result in rejecting God's ever present available help.

For Israel, their tests were to reveal their own hearts. For Paul's thorn in the flesh, it was to keep him from becoming arrogant and full of self-pride.

Purpose and Control

If God controls the storm, He has a purpose for it. Perhaps we experience storms, because we are not learning the lessons God wants us to learn. *If God controls the storm, He has a purpose for it.*

OFF THE PAGES AND INTO MY LIFE

- 1) Begin to realize that the storms of our personal soul are in God's loving hands.
- 2) Realize that whatever our experiences may be, God is bigger than our experiences. And whatever your disappointments are, God is bigger than your disappointments. We must remember and believe that He is still on His throne ruling over heaven and earth and our soul storms are in His plan and under His Lordship.
- 3) Begin to look for the lessons you have missed. Ask God to help you learn from each and every storm – the ones that are over and the ones you are presently facing. Remember, its not just about your well-being. It is all about learning from God and bringing honor and glory to Him through our storms, until he says, "peace be still".

-----Extra relevant passages of Scripture-----

2Cor. 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

1Cor. 10:12-13 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. (13) No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Jos 1:5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.

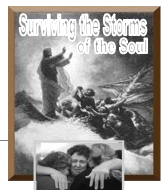
1Ch 28:20 Then David said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished.

Heb 13:5-6 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (6) So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

Never leave or forsake

Deu 31:6 Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."

Your thoughts so far



“Depression and Darkness of the Soul”

July 24, 2011

As I mentioned in the introduction, this is not merely for the one who is suffering, but for the community of believers as a whole. This is not directed only to those who are experiencing the storm, but for those who are in the boats around the one who is struggling to survive their storm.

Heb 6:17-19 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, (18) so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. (19) We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,

Two anchors for our storms

1) Mark 4:36 principle – We are not weathering our storms alone. Jesus is present with us. Others are in the same boat – other boats are in the storm as we are.

2) Romans 5:2 God’s purpose in our storm is to take us from our weak and frail faith, to a supernaturally supercharged hope.

These are anchors because these serve to assure us that we are not without help and our trouble is not without purpose.

HE VALUE OF STORMS

Surviving the Storms of the Soul depends on realizing that Storms display the glory of God. God's Presence is Displayed in His creation. Weather is part of God's creation and in the storm, God displays His presence and His power.

The truth is, we are in awe of God, just as much at beautiful sunset as we are at a devastating tornado – only from a different perspective.

Psalms 29:1-11 A Psalm of David. Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. (2) Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness. (3) The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters. (4) The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. (5) The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. (6) He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. (7) The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire. (8) The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. (9) The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, "Glory!" (10) The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever. (11) May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!

Storms of nature display the awesome presence and power of God. They can cause us to revere God and worship and trust Him more.

v.1-2) Worship the God of glory and might

v3) The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders

v4) His voice is powerful

v5) He breaks cedars of Lebanon

v6) He causes Lebanon and Sirion to skip like a wild ox.
There are nearly two mile high mountain peaks.

v9) The good, the bad and the glorious
causes the deer to give birth
He strips forests bare
He causes all to cry “*Glory*”

v10-11) –Presents the lordship of God over nature and His people.

Gen. 1 states that with the voice of the Lord God spoke all of creation into being. That includes all laws of nature and forces of physics that keep planets spinning and stars shining.

Heb. 1 states that with the same word of God, all His creation is sustained and held together. That includes all circumstances and situations that daily affect you and me.

God’s Presence

The storms of the soul display the awesome presence and power of God. When we hunger or thirst and God provides for our needs, we consider Him faithful and loving.

When we have needs, we consider God sufficient to supply all our needs in Christ Jesus our Lord. When we experience pain, we expect Him to send relief.

When we struggle with the darkness of the soul, we look to Him to provide light and life. When we are fearful, we trust God as our Rock and our Fortress.

All these however, are more or less conditional, depending upon how we perceive His meeting us in the time and fashion that we have expected from Him.

Should God act or move outside our prescribed parameters, then our perspective of His faithfulness and loving kindness becomes marred. God must act as we expect Him to, otherwise we tend to push Him away. And when we distance ourselves from God, we increase our storm and our own darkness grows even darker.

Psalm 29 presents God as the Creator of storms. If He is Creator of the storms, then He is also the Controller of the storms. And if God is the Creator and Controller of our storms, then we must believe that He has a purpose in all He creates and all He controls – even in that which brings us darkness of soul.

Surviving the Storms of the Soul depends on realizing that Storms are intended to display the glory of God.

THE BREWING OF THE STORM OF DEPRESSION.

** This takes into consideration that a person's depression is not clinical or medical in nature.*

As storms begin brewing and often worsen with time, depression begins with circumstances that spiral out of control. And with emotions and imaginations taking over, magnifying our storm and bringing us down into the pit of hopelessness, we begin to feel the darkness of depression setting in.

Unrealized Expectations

Our expectations can make things worse, when our desires and expectations upon God are unrealistic or at least unbiblical.

Our unrealized expectations are those we had of God which were, not found in Scripture and were not according to His plan and purpose for our faith formation.

Discouragement

Discouragement results when things don't go the way we had planned or expected. We become disheartened, we experience a

dampened spirit, and discouragement begins overriding our logical thinking process and clouds our ability to see life realistically.

Depression is a deeper, unshakable form of soul discouragement which initially is sensed as a sadness or darkness of the soul. This is the time to seek out someone you can trust to share your feelings with, who will walk with you through your storm and who will pray with you. Depression emphasizes the gathering darkness and turns the spirit into gloominess, melancholy and possibly despair.

Despair evidences a deepening misery. It is the anguish of the soul with a growing sense of hopelessness and that the problems of life and the storms of the souls are unresolvable.

Desperation is an extreme anxiety, and realization that the growing fear of hopelessness will never be resolved. Along with this, often comes the thought that life is not worth living or that ending of life is the only answer to the perceived impending, eternal hopeless darkness.

This is a downhill slope from reality to false marred perspectives on our circumstances and on life. It is crucial, that before a person reaches this stage, they seek help from others. We all need a friend, a confidant, a pastor, a listener, or someone who we can trust to listen to our situation, our feelings and our venting, and lovingly accept us, and walk with us a bit through our dark journey.

We may be tempted to think, "I have no one". But God may well have someone who is caring, stationed near you, for such a time as this in your life. And once you work through this, you may soon be the person God uses to offer help and hope in the life of someone else.

“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.” - 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

This downhill spiral, by the way, is the opposite of what God intends our storms to achieve. Desperation should draw us to realize our desperate need for God and His intervention in our situation. Desperation can be that which takes us from weak frail faith, to supernaturally supercharged Hope. Once desperation begins growing, God and help seems farther away, and a sense of hopelessness, no way out, - why go on thoughts begin to be entertained.

As our emotions become more in control of our reality, our light tends to grow dimmer and dimmer, until we reach the darkness of soul of depression.

2Cor. 4:8-18 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; (10) always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. (11) For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (12) So death is at work in us, but life in you. (13) Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, (14) knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. (15) For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. (16) So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (17) For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, (18) as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Notice how Paul writes. He doesn't tell his story, nor does he focus on the problems of the person he is addressing. Instead, he speaks to the church, including himself and encourages the recipients by reminding that they are not alone in their struggle to survive the storms of the soul. Paul writes as *one of them*, and that there are *others in the same boat* ^[Mark4:36], and there are other boats on the same storm. This is the ministry of community of believers to one another. Realizing there others around us whom God has carefully stationed and prepared to help. This must be someone we can risk trusting, reaching out, sharing and telling others what I am going through.

I pray that each of us survive the storms of the soul and I pray that the church remembers that we may well be part of the solution and victory in helping one another in our struggle to survive the storms of the soul.

Christian

- 1) What circumstance has brought on your depression? What expectations have gone unrealized? Were they realistic? Were they your expectations imposed upon God? Has God's Sovereignty been defeated and has His perfect will been thwarted?
- 2) Attempt to reverse the process that has brought about the discouragement, depression or despair.
 - a. Allow and invite God to come afresh and do His work in your life and shine His light in your darkness.
 - b. Open your spirit to what God may want to do or change or begin in you.
 - c. Confess your darkness to God – confess your unmet desires and your unrealized expectations.
 - d. Surrender your desires to the perfect sovereign will of God

e. Connect yourself closely to the body life of the church. Connect with other believers whom God may use to come along side you and encourage you.

1Thes. 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

For some, storms can wash away their foundation and erode their faith. As a community, we should be looking to build up one another with encouraging words, and act of kindness. For many, this may be all that is needed to keep them from being overtaken by the darkness of the soul.

Church

- 1) Be gentle, kind and patient with those whom you perceive to be struggling to survive a storm of the soul.
- 2) Attempt to be understanding of those who suffer through things that you do not.
- 3) Be an available boat in the water of their storms in the event you have opportunity to help

Sometimes all we want to know is how much longer will my storm last? When will God bring light back into my darkness?

Rev 6:9-11 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. (10) They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (11) Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

We may ask: “How Long Oh, Lord...” - How long til its all over? How long till I’m through this trial? How long til things get better?

God says: (1) until my will is accomplished (2) until your faith is purified (3) until your lesson has been learned (4) until I have received praise and been glorified in your storm, as I alone deserve.

Suffering and struggling to survive the storms of the soul is God’s way of getting us from frail, weak faith to supernaturally supercharged hope.

In the end, its not about our desires or our expectations, -- its not about our hardships or comforts – its not about life or death.

Our storms are all about God’s will being accomplished, our faith being purified, our lessons being learned and God being praised and receiving glory. Until we come to understand this, we will forever be struggling and experiencing shipwreck by our storms.

Jesus had His own struggles – He experienced His own storms.

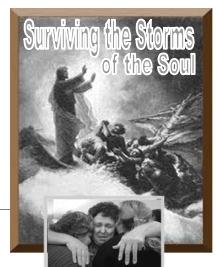
COMMUNION

Isa 53:3-7 He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (4) Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (5) But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. (6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (7) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

Heb 12:2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus knows. Jesus cares. Jesus is Lord over all. Jesus awaits you to trust Him enough to cry out to Him and to look for those He has somewhere around you, ready to listen and to care for you in the storm of your soul.

Your thoughts so far



“Anger: The Deadly Emotion”

August 7, 2011

INTRODUCTION

In Chicago, it was not unusual to hear about “road rage” on the Chicagoland expressways. That is someone becoming so angry during traffic – someone cuts them off, or says or gestures something that is offensive and things begin to heat up, then to boil, until the pressure inside them causes an emotional explosion, and they begin to express their anger in an explosive manner, by using their own car as a weapon. Some even pull a gun and start shooting at people on the roadway.

When we are dealing with an emotion like anger, it doesn’t take long for things to get completely out of control. It is important for each of us to understand that God’s word is clear that anger is serious Business

General Biblical Wisdom re: anger

Anger will get worse if left to itself. Anger feeds on our sinful human nature. Anger grows toward violence and revenge.

If left to itself, anger can grow into Rage (uncontrolled anger) or malice (angry, hostile actions- retaliation) it can turn into hatred or even murder.

In Genesis chapter 4, Cain became angry at his brother Abel and the result was devastating.

Gen 4:5-7 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. (6) The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? (7) If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is

crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

God's warning went unheeded and Cain's anger went unaddressed so long until it grew so great he killed him.
In Genesis chapter 37 Joseph's brothers growing anger turned to hatred.

Gen 37:4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

I have known married couples like that. One is so filled with built up anger over time, so that one spouse cannot say one good thing about the other. When you hate someone you can't hide it.

And the danger of anger and hatred is that they are the next best things to murder.

Mat 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' (22) But I say to you that everyone who is **angry with his brother will be liable to judgment;** whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

Anger can grow into hatred and even murder – at least from God's perspective.

We must be careful regarding the things that Fuel our Anger

Jas 1:14-15 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (15) Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Anger is not necessarily sin. But it can certainly quickly give birth to sin.

→ → *Temptation/Testing /provocation* → *Anger* → *sin*

Verses warning us about anger

Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret - it leads only to evil (Psalm 37:8).

A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult (Prov.12:16).

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing (Proverbs 12:18).

A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless (Proverbs 14:16)

A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated (Proverbs 14:17).

A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly (Proverbs 14:29).

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1).

Some General Effects of Anger

Anger can.....

1) hurt the feelings of those we care about. Deep emotional wounds – angry words can cut us like a knife/sword.

2) cause lasting Damage to relationships that are dear to us. Cause us to hold grudges and harbor unforgiveness, which are significant obstacles to meaningful personal relationships.

* It can alienate us from people with whom we have no relationships.

3) affect your work performance – lose concentration, make mistakes, waste time, become careless, lead to on the job injury.

4) Quench the work of the HS

1Th 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit.

5) Hinder our prayers – Is. 59:2

Isa 59:2 but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

6) Close doors of kingdom opportunity with those God has called us to reach for Christ and even disqualify you from ministry, at least temporarily - until we allow God to change us as He did with Moses.

7) Cause significant personal problems, such as physical illness – it increases stress, it can affect blood pressure, it can cause heart problems, or stroke - Some have even described anger as an emotional cancer that can eat you alive.

Things that may be fueling my anger

1) Unresolvable circumstance – you're stuck, life has been unfair – things haven't gone the way you had planned and now you are angry and you take it out on whoever is handy.

2) A Critical spirit or pride – When we don't get the recognition or admiration we feel we deserve, our anger will most likely be fueled.

3) Unresolved conflict or offenses – What may begin as a minor disagreement, can escalate into a heart full of fury and a mind filling up with spiteful options of retaliation.

4) Unforgiveness and resentfulness – Things people do to insult or offend us can lead to anger, hatred and even murderous thoughts. Failing to properly address our seething emotions can lead to unforgiveness and a

complete personality change for the worst.

5) Disappointment w/ others or even with God. When anyone fails to live up to our expectations of their performance, it can result in growing, simmering, boiling and even exploding display.

- 6) Grief or loss – often leads unintentionally, to anger. Something or someone dear was taken away from them. There is the feeling of injustice or unfairness which is becomes extremely difficult to deal with.
- 7) Rejection or Offenses – This is often the result of a broken relationships with the opposite gender. This could also occur among coworkers, where one's ideas or suggestions are perceived to be disregarded or devalued.
- 8) Victimization and/or injustice – Any time we feel singled out or that I was treated differently or spoken more harshly to, than others in the same group - this presents an opportunity for anger to flare up.

It is important for each of us to understand that God's word is clear that anger is serious Business.

Moses' and the Emotion that Killed

Anger is not sin, but can lead to murder.

Exo 2:11-12 One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. (12) He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

Righteous to Sinful

Moses Anger began righteously but ended sinfully. Moses' anger began over injustice and mistreatment toward's his/God's people. But in a moment in time, that anger exploded into rage. It was A knee-jerk reaction that cost him plenty.

He should have been angry. He was righteously angry over another person's pain and difficult life circumstances. The fact that he was angered, demonstrated that he cared.

Moses was 40 yrs old, when he killed the Egyptian, then fled for his life into the wilderness. And at the end of Ex. 2, the Bible tells us that the Israelites cried out to God and we are told that God knew of their situation.

Now Ex. 3 states:

Exo 3:1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro,...

With just the turn of a page, its is 40 years later.

Act 7:29-30 At this retort Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons. (30)
"Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush.

QQ: Could Moses have handled his anger differently? More productively? Yes. After all, He was an Egyptian ruler. God had raised him into a place of great authority. He could have handled it differently.

It was here, that Moses fled, and became a shepherd for about 40 yrs. And It was also there that God came to Moses, all those years later and called him to be the deliverer of His own people out of Egypt.

Did Moses sin? **Yes.** And Moses' sin cost him plenty.

Was God able to use him anyway? Yes.

Was there correction from God?

Yes. Anger and sin are serious business to God.

1) There was the correction of his circumstances. He went from Emperor to sheep herder. God used his Circumstances and the consequences of his own sin to correct him.

2) Then There was the correction of time. God took Moses away from his life of comfort, ease and notoriety and blessed him with 40 yrs of training and restoration.

3) No doubt, God blessed Moses with learning many sheep herding lessons that were no doubt transferable principles to help prepare him to lead and shepherd a rebellious people.

4) Finally, God used the entire experience, to change Moses into the deliverer He wanted him to be – to bring good out of evil – to work all things out for the good of Moses and Israel, and for the glory of God.

Was it easy? NO. There were probably not many easy lessons. There also were probably not many pleasant days in those 40 yrs. But God used that time, to forge him into the man, the minister, the shepherd and the deliverer He needed him to be.

QQ: Did his anger recur again? Yes.

In **Ex. 32** – Moses anger over Israel's idolatry when they made and worshiped the golden calf. And he became so angry, he threw down the tablets of the 10 commandments and smashed them. But, God worked that one out too.

QQ: Did his anger ever recur again? Yes. In Numbers 20:8-12 When the people of God complained and murmured so much that Moses exploded with anger again and struck the rock, when God had told him only to speak to the rock.

Num 20:8-12 "Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and **tell the rock** before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle." (9) And Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he commanded him. (10) Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" (11) And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out

abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. (12) And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them."

But, God worked that out too. Are you starting to feel better about your own anger problems?

Are there any Lessons Anger might teach us?

1) Anger can help us Learn to Trust God's Sovereignty.

Even when we make mistakes and when we fall into sin, God is able to forgive and restore us and use us and make something great and holy out of the mess that we have gotten ourselves into.

2) Anger can bring us to Realize our own weakness. If there is any good thing about sin and recurring sin – is that it is a constant reminder of our fallenness, our weakness, our frailty, our desperate need for God in our lives, not merely in the storms but in the calm time as well. Because it is in the calm time that our defenses are down. Its in the calm time when we think life is good and we aren't expecting or thinking about temptation or sin or trials.

If there is any good thing about our sin, it is that it reminds us of how utterly dependent we are upon His continuous grace and help and strength. No matter how far we come or how mature we may think we have grown, we are always just an act of Gods grace away from another life mess.

3) It can build Patience and endurance. It is these elements of struggle and survival which the Bible says God ultimately uses to bring about HOPE and spiritual growth and maturity. God works through our weaknesses and problems,

4) Anger can cause us to cast ourselves before God's mercy in order to seek His forgiveness and surrender to the Spirit's filling all over again.

5) It can drive us to an Accountability relationship with other mature believing Christians.

God wants to use the church as a means whereby we can find help and restoration to God. We don't need a "man" to take care of our sins for us, but God's tools are often the community of believers, as we minister to one another and come along side one another to encourage one another.

Gal 6:1-2 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. (2) Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Moses had one such person – his Father-in-law Jethro. He taught Moses how to become a Shepherd to the sheep, as well how to shepherd God's people Israel. He gave Moses advice and helped bear his burdens.

If there is anything missing in the church of Jesus Christ today is this kind of trusting accountability between believing Christians. We need one another, and we need someone who will come along side us to encourage us and help bear our heavy loads and encourage us when we struggle to survive the storms of our soul.

When its all said and done, we need to remember this:

*** God really can change us.**

Anger is not sin, yet it can lead to murder.

Anger is something we must learn to come to grips with, that is, we must desire and seek God's help.

Gods help is available if we desire it and seek it. Put on, clothe yourself, let brotherly love continue. Desire, pursue, and nurture freedom from anger.

Perhaps we won't be so defeated by anger if we clothe ourselves with...

- **Love** - David had every right to be angry with his son Absalom. After all, Absalom wanted to kill David, Yet David loved Absalom passionately, and grieved deeply when he learned of his death.

*The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you---O Absalom, my son, my son" (2 Samuel 18:33) * **Only God can replace anger with love.***

- **Patience.**

Look at God's example in 2 Peter 3:9 and Proverbs 15:18.

2 Peter 3:9. *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance*

Proverbs 15:18. *A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel*

- **Eternal mindedness**

Look at Paul's example in 2 Corinthians 4

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 *.Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal*

- **Forbearing**

Ephesians 4:2 *.Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love*

Colossians 3:13 *.Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you*

- **Understanding other people**

Hebrews 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are---yet was without sin*

- **Aware of anger's destructiveness.**

Psalm 37:8 *Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret--it leads only to evil*

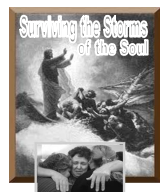
Proverbs 15:1 *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger*

Matthew 27:12-14 *When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge---to the great amazement of the governor*

Work on clothing ourselves with proper Christian attitude and actions.

Work on the filling of the HS.

Work on the fruit of the spirit.



“Unforgiveness: *And Loving It*”

August 28, 2011

INTRODUCTION

How can a family forgive the man who kidnapped and violated and tortured their child? How could the family in the Oslo slayings, say about the man who had just massacred their children, “we forgive him”.

Unforgiveness is a sin born out of sin

Anger is not sin, but can give way to sin if it goes unchecked and unaddressed.

James 1:14-15 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (15) Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Anger, simmers and evolves into hatred, which in turn is nurtured, watered and fertilized until it begins to grow into unforgiveness,

Unforgiveness has lasting effects

Unforgiveness simmers and hardens and embitters and causes callousness. Someone has said that unforgiveness poisons and putrifies otherwise pleasant people and pleasant circumstances.

Unforgiveness desensitizes the spirit of a person and affects our relationship with others and with God. A person who is angry, embittered and unforgiving toward others is also suffering in their relationship with God.

Mat 6:12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Mat 6:14-15 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, (15) but if you do not

forgive others their trespasses, **neither will your Father forgive your** trespasses.

The Bible teaches us that sin separates us from God. That is the situation of every human being apart from forgiveness in Christ. But what if Christians harbor anger, nurture hatred, and foster unforgiveness? What if we allow those sins in our heart and if we allow them knowingly??

God says, if we harbor hatred and refuse to forgive others, He will treat us the same way – God won't forgive us. And if we are unforgiven by God for our day to day sins, it affects our relationship with Him. Unforgiveness distances us from God and it quenches any intimacy we may have had or may desire to have with God.

If we allow weeds to grow in our garden they do not go away by themselves. They grow. They choke out the other desirable plants.

Unforgiveness will bring about the divine intervention of Gods personal discipline.

When Anger and unforgiveness is allowed to grow in your heart, it will choke out or perhaps God will personally remove – peace, any joy you may have hoped for and any contentment with life that you had hoped you might find. It will assassinate other relationships you have, even ones you have worked hard to nurture and develop intimacy with.

When God's people live in sin, God holds back His blessings. Whether you are living in an adulterous relationship, or an otherwise immoral relationship, or if you are living a life of self-righteousness and judging and criticizing others around you. If you are living in the sin of unforgiveness, or whatever it may be, God will withhold His blessings from you. He will refrain from answering your prayers and He will certainly discipline you or me or any of us who are living in sin, until we confess that sin, repent from it and come clean.

Heb. 12:5-11 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. (6) For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." (7) It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? (8) If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. (9) Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? (10) For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. (11) For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Unforgiveness is a sin born out of sin.

Unforgiveness camouflages us with the unbelieving culture that is taking us over.

When we become like the world, we lose our Biblical impact on the world.

Eph 4:30-32 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. (31) Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: (32) And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Unforgiveness and Others

We don't develop unforgiveness in a vacuum. We don't express unforgiveness in a vacuum. People and circumstances contribute to our unforgiveness. We express our anger and unforgiveness toward others.

Unforgiveness and the Vacuum Cleaner Salesman

“Good afternoon Madam, do I have a vacuum sweeper for you! Why in just a few short minutes of your day, this Handy Dandy Swifty Sweeper Model 2011 can have that dirty old carpet of yours looking clean and luxurious again.”

Two possible responses from the lady of the house.

1) “How dare you insinuate that my carpet is dirty”. This is the prideful response.

2) “Wow! You mean I may have a dirty carpet?” This is the concerned response.

The first response is a response that communicates that she is most concerned about the reputation of her carpet. The Second response communicates that she is most concerned about cleanliness of her carpet.

She begins to think about it. Her husband works hard and comes home and doesn’t take his shoes off, so there may be some dirt in this carpet.

We also have pets, so there’s a good chance we have some pet hair on the carpet that I really can’t see too well. Our youngest has allergies. There could be anything living and growing in that carpet.

Our older children eat snacks, drop their food on the floor, pick it up and continue eating it. You know, that vacuum cleaner salesman may have something.

Response #1 is concerned with reputation – “How will it look, if the neighbors see me purchasing a vacuum sweeper”

Response #2 is concerned with the cleanliness of the carpet – “How might it help my family if I can keep the carpet cleaner?”

Unforgiveness can become like a dirty carpet – it can become the breeding ground for a hundred other sins.

Unforgiveness and other Christians

*Unloving attitudes, Unkind remarks and an Unforgiving spirit
can even be directed toward other Christians.*

John 13:35 “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have love one to another.”

But you realize that the church today is rapidly becoming indistinguishable from the culture around us. Sexual immorality is **almost** as prevalent among Christians, as among non-Christians. Divorce is **just** as prevalent among Christians as among non-Christians.

Instead of having love for one another and forgiveness toward one another, we harbor anger and unforgiveness – so much so that the opposite is true.

*By this shall all men know that you are just like the
unbelievers around you, if you lack love and harbor
unforgiveness one to another.*

“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.”

*Unforgiveness camouflages us with the unbelieving culture that is
taking us over.*

JOSEPH AND HIS EXAMPLE OF FORGIVENESS

Joseph did not wait for his brothers to repent. He took the first step in forgiveness.

Pain that deserved retaliation

Gen 37:4-5 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him. (5) Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more.

Their jealousy grew. Their anger increased. Their hatred matured to murderous intent.

Forgiveness that was undeserved.

Gen 50:20-21 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. (21) So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Years later, at an unexpected reunion, Joseph evidenced that he trusted God and had forgiven his brothers. Even though they may not have deserved it, Joseph did the right thing and forgave his brothers.

Do not wait for others to repent before you forgive them. That day may never come. Instead, Forgive others as God has forgiven you, thus quenching the sin of unforgiveness and receive the personal freedom from the bondage that continues to steal your joy and keep you in the prison of your hate.

OFF THE PAGE AND INTO MY LIFE **How can I forgive?**

If we do not address our sin, God will! In order for faith to be strengthened, it must be refined...by fire.

*"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply.
The flames shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine."*

Fire consumes wood hay and stubble. Fire purifies metal by separating pure metal from the dross.

God wants to purify us. Anger, hurt, offense, pain, or disappointment can lead us and keep us in the prison of unforgiveness. Unforgiveness keeps others within the prison walls of hardness, bitterness, hatred, and coldness. We are compassionless to others. We evidence toward others, the joylessness with which unforgiveness has marked us.

1) Be honest with God. Ps. 142:1-3

2) Give your unforgiveness to God – Ps. 139:2-3-24

3) Forgive and continue to forgive .

To be mastered by past and pain or to master it, is the crucial issue each time we chose to forgive or refuse forgiveness. It must be ongoing.

Eph. 4:32 “Forgive as Christ is forgiving you...”

- present participle – continuous, ongoing action.

“forgave” fits better into our theological paradigm, but it is present and it is a participle indicating an ongoing action taking place.

Mat 18:21-23 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" (22) Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.

7 X 7? Or 70 X 7? - ongoing and unending.

Every time an unbelieving feeling, thought or attitude comes around, be continually forgiving – ongoing and unendingly.

If you harbor any unresolved anger or nurture an unforgiving attitude toward anyone anywhere, it must be dealt with.

1) make a list – For your eyes only. Not a list to bring things up or a list of remembrance to feed anger. No list should be an unloving record of wrongs. (1 Cor.13) But make a list of all the

people , all the circumstances, all the times you have been hurt, offended, wounded, disappointed, angered or whatever make a list of those people and those circumstances and prepare to forgive.

2) Attempt to identify WHY. Record the reason the people or events on that list angered you or why you continue to be unforgiving?

Is this worth holding the person prisoner to my sinful anger?

3) Ask God to help you. Confess that you may not feel like forgiving that person. We seldom *feel* like forgiving others. Something in our sinful nature enjoys being angry and holding grudges. It is simply part of our fallen, sinful, broken human nature.

4) Pray for those people, events and circumstances. Ask God to help, encourage, redeem and bless those who have wronged you.

5) Speak statements of forgiveness to the people by name regarding the circumstances and even to God for His disappointment to you. Take forgiving actions. Write a note of encouragement or appreciation.

6) Look for opportunities to serve the person who has offended you. Serving others in the name of Christ, can do much toward changing hearts and smoothing out rough relationships.

David was a young Rabbi in our community. He was young and the leader of a very affluent local Jewish synagogue. He was also the leader of the interfaith ministerium of which I attended.

While he seemed courteous and tolerant to nearly everyone in our group, I always perceived his attitude toward me was one of detest. I tried to gain his respect, but to no avail.

This was the time when The Passion of the Christ was just released. One day after everyone else had left the interfaith meeting, I asked David if he had seen the Passion of the Christ. I thought it might be a good conversation starter towards the gospel.

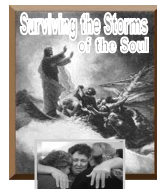
He immediately went off, talking about the producer, the story line and other things. I then said, “what do you say we go see it together and talk about it afterwards?” To my surprise he accepted.

As we neared the theatre, he took off his Jewish skull cap and put on a baseball cap. I asked him why he did that. He stated that he was actually afraid that someone (an anti-semite) might jump him. I told him, “if anyone tries to get to you, they’ll have to go through me first.” That came out of my mouth before I realized what I had said. I remember how he looked at me – like I was crazy.

As we went into the movies, he offered to purchase some refreshments for the two of us. After the movie on the way home, we talked just a little about the movie. His only words to describe it was, “well it was very powerful”.

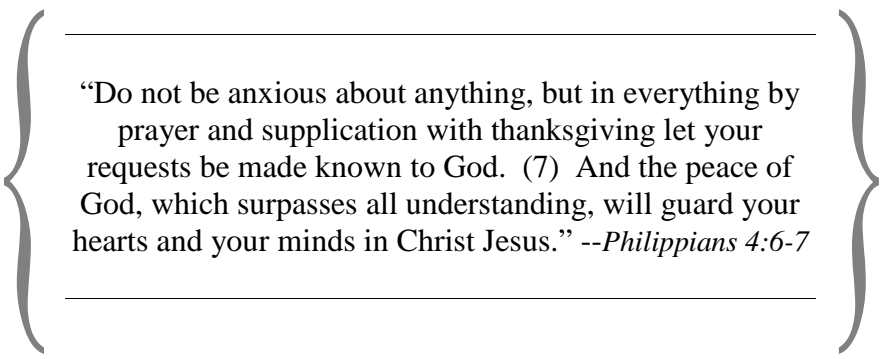
He never said it, but after that day, our relationship changed for the positive so that I was certain he knew that I held no unforgiveness toward him for how he had treated me. And somehow I knew God had caused him to view me or my “religion” a bit differently.

God’s way really do work!



“Fear and Anxiety: Our Worst Nightmare”

Sept. 4, 2011



“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” --*Philippians 4:6-7*

INTRODUCTION

“Fear, failure and My worst Nightmare: What if..” Fear nurtures worry and anxiety. Scripture urges us to cast your care upon Him, for He cares for you. (1 Pet.5:7)

Fear causes us to think the very worst. Fears often arise due to the anticipation of past experiences repeating themselves. Worry feeds off entertaining thoughts of “What if...?”

FEAR HAS ITS BENEFITS.

Fear can make us cautious and careful. Fears need not paralyze us or keep us in bondage. What’s the worst think that could happen? We die?

An unbeliever was talking about Oral Roberts' statementt, "*If I don't raise so much money, Jesus is going to kill me*". The unbeliever said, "*If you Christians really believe you're going to heaven when you die, then why should he worry if Jesus killed him or not?*" To which I replied, "*Amen!*".

Even if our worst fears *did* come true and even if we *were* to die – for the Christian, that is certainly **not** the worst thing that could happen. While we probably should not *want* to die, Scripture certainly doesn't present death as something the believing Christian should dread or be overly concerned with avoiding. (2 Cor.5:8)

Sources of fear

1) Known dangers can become sources of worry.

Isa 43:1-2 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. (2) When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

2) Past experiences can stir up fear.

Isa 41:10 fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

3. Anticipation of repeated or unpleasant experiences can cause us to be overly concerned and stressed.

4. Lies, untrue information or misinformation can develop undue and unfounded fears.

5. Anything which is unknown can become a source of worry, that we can mentally insert the worst case scenario to any

potential set of circumstances, so that fear rises up and takes control.

6. General worry and anxiety often lead to fear. Otherwise small things, left to grow, can become life controlling issues. Thinking too much and imagining the worst, causes us to expect and fear the worst. These can be sources of unrealistic or at least unnecessary fears of improbable events.

Borrowing a Jack

Growing up, when my Dad perceived I was worried about something, he used to say, “*Now, don’t go borrowing a jack*”. The saying comes from a story of a salesman who was traveling down a country road, when he had a flat tire. Upon opening his trunk, he discovered he had no jack.

He had heard about how friendly country folk were, so he decided to walk to the nearest farm house and ask the residents if he could borrow their jack. Upon nearing one house, he began talking to himself. “It is an evening and the people may not want to be disturbed”. “They may even become mean and insult me.” “In fact they may tell me they refuse to let me borrow their jack.”

Arriving at the door of the house he knocked on the door and by now, he had talked himself into thinking the worst. In a moment the farmer came to the door and before he could say

“howdy stranger”, the traveler blurter out, “Aw keep your old jack, I didn’t need it anyway!”

That’s “borrowing a jack” – when we worry and talk ourselves into believing the very worse about our situation, for no reason.

7. Satan can realistically be the source of our fears. No one is fully immune from his subtle, whispering lies. He is the thief (John 10:10) and the father of lies. (John Jn.8:44)

But Jesus is the source of all hope and life. He has come to overcome the enemy and provide that which the devil desires to take away.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

No wonder he tries to bring fear and discouragement to control us. It is fear that will cause us to forget the promises of God, which are greater than the threats of satan.

Staying Alert

Fear can keep us on the alert to the enemy's attacks

1Th 3:5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for **fear** that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

Fear can help us to be sober minded.

1Pe 1:13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being **sober-minded**, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1Pe 4:7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and **sober-minded** for the sake of your prayers.

1Pe 5:8 Be **sober-minded**; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

2Ti 4:5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

2Co 7:5 For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn--fighting without and **fear** within.

Fear Has Its Benefits.

FEAR HAS ITS BONDAGE

Fear can keep us from pursuing and experiencing God's blessing. Our human nature tends to naturally focus on the negative things or even sinful things.

Fear that forgets

Fear can cause us to forget God's faithfulness

Lam 3:15-25 (GNB) Bitter suffering is all he has given me for food and drink. (16) He rubbed my face in the ground and broke my teeth on rocks. (17) I have forgotten what health and peace and happiness are. (18) I do not have much longer to live; my hope in the LORD is gone. (19) The thought of my pain, my homelessness, is bitter poison. (20) I think of it constantly, and my spirit is depressed. (21) **Yet hope returns when I remember this one thing:** (22) The LORD's unfailing love and mercy still continue, (23) Fresh as the morning, as sure as the sunrise. (24) The LORD is all I have, and so in him I put my hope. (25) The LORD is good to everyone who trusts in him,

Fear that paralyzes

In failure – It has been said that failure is the backdoor to successes. Everyone fails. Failure narrows down our options and painfully points us toward success.

In vocation – Fear can squelch creativity or innovation, trying out new ideas, pursuing new and better ways of doing business. Creativity always involves a bit of risk taking. Taking changes, going on hunches, attempting what was thought to be impossible can bring significant breakthroughs.

The Man Who Sees the Impossible is Wise.

The Man Who *Attempts* the Impossible
is a **Fool**.

The Man Who *Achieves* the Impossible
is a **Hero**.

It takes a willingness to risk, in order to become a hero.

In relationships - Fear prevents us from connecting, trusting, and keeps relationships shallow and superficial, keeping others at a distance.

In ministry - Fear can mean death in ministry. Fear says, “*that’ll never work*”, or “*God is not at work here*”. God blesses faith and *Fear **quenches** faith*. If the devil can get us to be afraid, then we will wind up accomplishing for him, what he wanted from the beginning, without him ever having to lift a finger.

Heb 2:14-18 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and deliver all those who **through fear of death** were subject to lifelong slavery. (16) For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. (17) Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (18) For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Fear Has Its Bondage.

How can I Survive my Storm of Fear?

Fear can be defeated.

Work through your fear with pen and paper and honesty.

QQ: What am I afraid of right now? What am I trying to avoid facing?

If I wasn't afraid right now, what would I be doing differently?

What would have to change, in order for me not to be afraid?

What am I afraid will happen in this situation?

What will happen if my anxious thoughts are true? What is the worst that will happen? If the very worst happens, then what?

Once you have faced your deepest fear and your own worst nightmare and survived, there is nothing left but courage.

Fear is not the absence of courage. Courage is not the absence of fear. In fact, Courage cannot exist apart from fear. If we had no fear, there would be no such thing as courage.

But courage is that which stands up, believes and takes action when fear tempts us to back down, shrink away, and remain cowering in the corner. Once courage takes its stand, fear is faced, victory can be experienced and there is nothing left to hinder us.

How Can I Survive My Storm of Fear?

APPLICATION

Be Proactive and Take Action

1) Get alone with God – list your fears

The Greatest fear of my life is..

- to be rejected - to go blind
- to lose a child - to be alone
- to never get married - to drown
- to marry the wrong person
- to fail at business - to burn to death

Why am I afraid of this potential situation?

Will God forsake me? Will I fail the test?

Will I be uncomfortable? Will it cause me pain? Will it make my life unpleasant? Will I lose something dear to me?

I am afraid of [list situation] because [fill in the blank] .

Intense fear can drive us to God more intensely, if we allow it to. God does not expect us to merely stop being afraid. He expects us to put something in place of fear – Faith.

- rethink our circumstances
- refocus our attention
- Reconsider our own weakness
- Remember His power and presence in our situation

Everyone has experienced Gods faithfulness, but not everyone has recognized it.

2) Replace Fear with Faith - Step out in faith in an area that is uncomfortable to you.

What are you afraid of? List your fears. Now list things that you could do – small things at first - that you could do to face your fear. Small things appear to have little consequence, but many small battles can add up to winning a war.

Mountain Rescue

I was once a part of a mountain rescue team in SE Tenn. Before jumping off a cliff, held only by a rope, we would practice hanging by the same rope only 1 foot off the ground. This helped us build faith in the rope that was eventually going to hold us over a 200 foot cliff.

We learned how to properly tie the knots that held us to the rope, that would keep us from falling. We also learned to never forget our safety line. We practiced not looking down. We didn't focus on the journey before us, only on the very next step we were about to take.

Fear can arise due to lack of faith. Therefore, ***Feed Your Faith***

We can build and strengthen our faith through God's holy Word.

Read Romans 10:17. Now re-read it. Memorize it. Now spend the rest of your life putting that memory verse into practice – building, exercising, strengthening, feeding and nurturing your faith.

3) Recount God's faithfulness in your life thus far...

Great fears will be met with great grace.

Lam 3:22-23 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; (23) they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

God's faithfulness has brought us through this week. Therefore, we are obligated to trust Him for this next week and beyond.

4) Meditate on passages of promise - Read God's promises regarding fear and anxiety – Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God – *Feed Your Faith.*

Fear Whispers – “God's promises are not true for me”

God's purpose is not to destroy us but to purify us. He will not allow us to be tempted or tested, beyond what we are able to endure, through His grace.

1Cor. 10:12-13 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. (13) No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Philp. 4:6-7 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Psa 37:25 I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.

Psa 56:3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

Fear Whispers – “God’s promises are not true for me”

Faith Shouts back, “...all the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God by us.” (2Cor. 1:20)

5) Walk in faith with the community of believers.

The Body Life of the Church is crucial. Relational connections and interaction among those who know, love, accept and have experienced what you may be experiencing and survived, can be a significant source of strength. Experiencing trusting relationships through sharing and disclosure and allowing others to pray for you and to encourage you, can help you to eventually be able to pray for others and minister to others and encourage others with your life experience and victory.

Until we die, we are conquerors. And once we die we are more than conquerors.

Rom 8:31-39 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (32) He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (33) Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. (34) Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? (36) As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." (37) No, **in all these things we are more than conquerors** through him who loved us. (38) For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height nor depth, nor

anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

6) Expect God's Intervention and Victory

"We have nothing to fear but fear itself. " Fear is one of Satan's oldest and yet often most effective weapons in disarming and incapacitating otherwise solid, mature Christians.

For the child of God, faith is just as much a "sacrament" as anything should be. For in true faith, does God reward us with true effectual grace – grace for salvation, grace for our difficulties, grace for fear, grace for any storm with which we may be struggling.

"Future Grace" - by John Piper

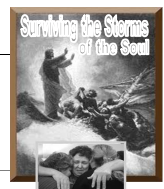
Past grace is glorified by intense and joyful gratitude.

Future grace is glorified by intense and joyful confidence.

This faith is what empowers us for venturesome obedience in the cause of Christ.

*Cast all your
anxieties on
Him, for He
cares about you
- 1 Peter 5:7*

1Cor. 15:54-58 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (55) "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (56) The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. (57) But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.



“Patriotism and a Nation’s Rejection of God”

Sept. 11, 2011 9/11 10th Anniversary

Recognizing and responding to Warning Signs and wakeup calls.

INTRODUCTION

Storms are a normal part of life. Storms will continue until...

- God’s purposes are accomplished
- Our Faith has been purified
- Our lessons have been learned
- God has received His rightful praise and has been appropriately glorified in our storms as He alone deserves.

THE WAY WE WERE – 1776

Declaration of Independence — “ *And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor* ”.

For all practical purposes they were committing treason and risking everything for the sake of a new nation, not governed by an oppressive and unsympathetic ruler, not based on their own strength and power, not boasting in anything, but fully dependent upon God and fully dedicated to His Holy Word as a necessary element in the forming and governing of this new nation.

Are we different today, than we were at the beginning of our nation? Is America committed to the same values? What is the Church like?

THE WAY WE WERE – PRE-9/11

America was growing more apart from and more defiant towards God.

The God is Dead movement. Gay and Lesbian movement. The Bible and prayer removed from our schools. God is being removed from our history books. History books are being rewritten and references to Faith of the founding fathers are not being omitted, but are denied altogether. They are being presented as mostly atheists, and men who would not want the Bible or God to be part of our public culture or government as it is today. All this is an attempt to erase God from our history books and our culture.

That was the decaying state of America just prior to 9/11.

The Way It Was -- for Israel

Israel turned away from God

- 1) God's people wandered in the wilderness
- 2) God sent conquering nations
- 3) God sent hardships and trials
- 4) God sent famine due to their sin

5) God declared His own intent to all but destroy His people. They suffered. They suffered the consequences of turning away from God. They suffered as a nation. They suffered as God's people.

However we look at it, Israel suffered the consequences of their sin, their apathy, their complacency and their rejection of God.

THE WAY IT WAS – POST 9/11

A. Churches were filled – People were praying in communities, calling for prayer in the Congress. Even News Anchor persons were blatantly calling for prayer for the nation.

Crisis briefly brought about a renewed awareness of our need and source being God.

People realized their need and source was God

People were praying – schools were praying – newspapers and magazines and TV news commentators were not afraid to talk about prayer or God.

B. But in no time at all, things were back to normal – back to the same decaying state. Ultimately, nothing had really changed. – circumstances recovered, monuments and memorials were erected to help us remember and yet after the crisis was over and the dust literally settled, Churches slowly reverted back to normal. Most Americans went back to life as usual and faith as usual. Once the Crisis was over, the initial problem and threat and horrors were gone. When the damage, the loss and the need is no longer before us, our sense and need for God also dissipates.

Before long, America was back to normal.

I heard one news caster say: “America will recover because we are Americans.” What a God-less and arrogant statement that was. That is a statement of ultra-patriotism that dismisses God’s protection and provision for our nation.

C. In 2002, I was part of a 9/11 one year anniversary. The Mayor spoke, military leaders addressed us and hailed our military intelligence and unequalled power. At that ceremony the name of God was *never once* mentioned *except* as we sang “God Bless America”.

What are we like today? Does America exhibit the same defiance toward God? Is the Church the same? Is the church complacent towards or consumed with the work of Christ?

THE WAY WE ARE – TODAY - SEPT. 11, 2011

First Responders excluded from 9/11 ceremony

NEW YORK - One week after the city's announcement that 9/11 first responders will not be invited to the 10th anniversary ceremony, firefighters, paramedics, and other volunteers continued to voice their anger, disappointment. Retired paramedic, Mike Miller, of the financial district said: "this is a total disrespect, we risked our lives and some of us still suffer from those injuries."

The office of Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced last week that given the space constraints, they had to focus on accommodating victims' family members first at the 10-year anniversary ceremony. (www.chinadaily.com)

Clergy Banned From 9/11 Ceremony

Religious leaders are calling on Mayor Michael Bloomberg to reverse course and offer clergy a role in the ceremony commemorating the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. Rudy Washington, a deputy mayor in former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's administration, said he's outraged. Mr. Washington organized an interfaith ceremony at Yankee Stadium shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

"This is America, and to have a memorial service where there's no prayer, this appears to be insanity to me," said Mr. Washington, who has suffered severe medical problems connected to the time he spent at Ground Zero. (www.foxnews.com)

Habakkuk 1:14 reminds us that God made men and fish. As a result, men worshiped their nets. It seems The more we have, the

more we feel we deserve. History shows the greater the wealth, the greater the power. The greater the resources, the greater the freedom, the more a people are blessed *by* God, then the more the people tend to be drawn away *from* God.

The more blessings, the more blessings are desired. The more blessings are desired, the more the Blesser is overlooked. *

History shows it and the Bible proves its.

Rom. 1:24-25 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, (25) because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

We should pray this is not the situation for America – that the blessings of God would take the place of God and become the downfall of the people.

“If we as a people, are not willing to suffer, then we as a nation need not desire to be great”

The Way We are Today -- Veterans Association of TX has required that during the military veteran’s funeral services on their property they are prohibiting the phrase “God bless you” or any reference to “God”.

Once crisis and tragedy is over, America quickly tends to revert to its decaying process.

Present stats from organizations, including George Barna, tell us that America is no different 10 years after 9/11 than it was 10 minutes before 9/11.

If we believe that 9/11 was God’s judgment on a Godless nation, then what might we expect for our future? Or if we believe 9/11 was God disciplining or purifying His people, then what might we expect next, due to our present state?

THE WAY IT WILL BE - ???

God promises to judge sin, to discipline and purify His people, to test faith, and to draw the world through end time events, to repent and turn to Him or suffer the consequences.

2 Pet. 3:10-12 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. (11) Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, **what sort of people ought you to be** in lives of holiness and godliness, (12) waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

1) We are called to suffer.

We are not called to comfort and ease and to live our lives to pursue our desires and dreams. We are to live, expecting to suffer.

1Pet. 2:19-21 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. (20) For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. (21) For to this you have been called, **because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.**

2Tim. 3:10-12 You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, (11) my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra--which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. **(12) Indeed,**

all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

“2012 Prophecies”. Many are predicting coming devastation and destruction and judgment of 2012. We do not know the day of the time, but the people of God do know for certainty that those times are coming.

God has promised that He will shake everything

Hag 2:6-7 For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. (7) And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts.

God will certainly shake the heavens and the earth.

Heb 12:25-29 See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. (26) At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." (27) This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken--that is, things that have been made--in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. (28) Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, (29) for our God is a consuming fire.

2) Christians have always suffered

We are no more privileged today, then the saints of old. We are no more deserving to escape suffering today, than believers did in Bible times. Yet they did suffer.

Heb. 11:33-38 who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, (34) quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. (35) Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. (36) Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. (37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated-- (38) of whom the world was not worthy-- wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

3) Don't think it strange to suffer

1Pet. 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

Jas 1:2-4 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

4) The Western Church or American Church considers suffering for Christ as something that is abnormal or to be avoided at all costs. However, the rest of the church around the world suffers for Christ and considers it an expectation and an honor.

SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

1) Spiritual Battle: Our enemies seek to attack the “infidels” – i.e. the “Christian nation” of America. If they only knew they can

just save themselves the trouble, because God is going to do it for them.

2) “A Sign of the Times”: Suffering is simply one more sign that God is bringing all things towards His intended end.

3) Preparing for the Storm: We should not gathering supplies, nor stockpiling food. We don’t need to begin hoarding water and dehydrated food in our basements There is no need to begin stocking up on ammunition.

- a. Do not relish our blessings too much
- b. American should focus on returning to God in full faith and passion.
- c. We must be fully trusting and serving Christ
- d. We must be teaching our families and training our children to be strong in faith so that when suffering comes, they will not feel as though God has abandoned us.
- e. We must be preparing to expect a shaking and endure suffering.

Pray for Repentance, Revival and a Renewed hunger for the presence and moving of God in our land, in our churches and in our families.

Be careful to not be patriotic for the sake of America and indifferent to the working of God to make this nation what He desires it to be.

Christians have always suffered. Christians will always suffer. Christians will *not* experience the wrath of God. Christians *will* be disciplined and tested.

Heb 12:5-7 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. (6) For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." (7) It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is

treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

Rev 3:10 Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

Warning Sign, Wake Up Calls and The Coming Shaking

Hurricane Hugo and Katrina - Tsunami's and Tidal waves that hit Indonesia and washed away Bande Ache - Earthquakes that devastated China and Haiti. More recent quakes that rocked Japan, again China. – are all but Warning Signs and Wake UP Calls.

Mat 24:4-13 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. (5) For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. (6) And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. (7) For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. (8) All these are the beginning of sorrows. (9) Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. (10) And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. (11) And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. (12) And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. (13) But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Earthquakes and other natural disasters will begin increasing in frequency and severity. Not to mention the growing tension in the Middle East and animosity against Israel. Things that the Bible tells us, will be signs of the nearing of the great shaking and the glorious return of the Lord Jesus.

These are things that point to the end times, and yet do not necessarily bring about repentance. In Rev. 6:16, people call for “the mountains and rocks, fall on us”. Anything but repentance from their ways – anything but God.

Some feel the church is immune or isolated from the sufferings to come and yet I find it interesting that the first chapters of Revelation address the Church and calls the churches to **Repentance**.

Every election is a commentary on our culture.

Everywhere the gospel has spread, been effective and then faded...

- 1) There is for the most part, a hardness and non-receptivity to the things of God and to the gospel.
- 2) There are rulers in authority who lead the people farther away from God
- 3) There is a rejection of Truth and a void of morality
- 4) There is a judgment or discipline from God
- 5) Growing spirituality but growing opposition towards Christianity

What matters most is what we are doing now and how we are living now. Are we being faithful now? Are we prepared to suffer, loose rights, endure oppression and to suffer persecution?

Expecting anything less is to discard the direction our nation is sliding and the end time promises of God’s word.

*“God and soldier alike, we adore,
in times of trouble, not before;*

*the danger passed, and all things righted,
God is forgotten, the soldier slighted”
--Rudyard Kipling*

Is God Forgotten in America?

Our God, Our Help in Ages Past

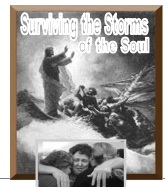
Isaac Watts, William Croft

Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

Under the shadow of Thy throne,
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

Like flowery fields the nations stand,
Pleased with the morning light;
The flowers beneath the mower's hand,
Lie withering ere 'tis night.

Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.



Regrets, Bad Choices, Missed Opportunities:

Dealing with the Consequences and Trusting God's Sovereignty.

September 25, 2011

Resource Book: "Putting Your Past Behind You" – Erwin Lutzer, Moody Press

INTRODUCTION

2 Sam. 24. David numbered his fighting men. For the consequences, God gave him a choice. **1)** 3 yrs of famine **2)** 3 months of fleeing for your life **3)** 3 days of plagues. --- David chose 3 days of plagues and 70,000 of his people died.
** What appeared to be the easy way out, and perhaps the least unpleasant, turned out to be devastating for the people of Israel.*

Gen. 37 - Joseph's brothers chose to sell Joseph into slavery. That bad choice resulted in the salvation of two nations and family forgiveness

** Gods Sovereignty was able to take what was meant for evil and used it for good.*

Gen. 24 - Isaac's Servant took time to pray and seek God's help in choosing a bride for Isaac – Yet it resulted in a mother's influence resulting in family deception and a son that desired to murder his brother.

** What appeared to have been done in a Godly manner, actually had some unpleasant and sinful consequences.*

** Righteous motives, don't necessarily guarantee pleasant outcomes from our choices.*

Mistakes, Failure, Defeat, Regrets, Poor choices, missed opportunities - Most feel they have experienced these kinds of

things. And some are haunted with questions like, “What if I had done things differently?” or “If only I had chosen more wisely?”

A fugitive from justice may spend his life running from the law, always looking over his shoulder, regretting his choices and wondering when his past will catch up with him. A young woman may spend her lonely days wondering, “Why did I ever marry him?”

We have regrets in our relationships. We feel we have made bad choices in life’s vocation. We are faced with an opportunity for a business deal and choose the safe choice, only to discover the stocks in that business we did not invest in – went sky high.

With all our regrets and choices, we are left to deal with the consequences. We think, “...If only I could do that over, I’d do things differently”. “If I knew then, what I know now, things would be different.”“If I had only recognized the warning signs, I wouldn’t have made that decision.”

Tattoos

One pastor describes the decisions we make and the consequences we experience being much like tattoos – they are basically with us for life. One man still shares, “If I had only known that elderly man was crossing that intersection, I would not have been racing my car.”

As one man takes another drink, he wishes for the 1000th time, that he had not gambled away his family’s life savings.

Life experiences are like tattoos on our lives. Once we have them, we basically have to live with them. But there is hope. We can make new and better decisions. God has not forsaken us. He can even redeem our past and our poor decisions. *We can begin again!*

***We must learn to Learn from our mistakes and
that God’s ways are always best.***

Patterns

With many people – poor choices and destructive decisions are often patterns, often part of a lifestyle, and part of our fallen human thinking process.

Every poor choice takes time to recover from its consequences.

Hurricane “Irene” is over but recovery is not a quick fix – no quick and easy solutions – no magic lamps to rub - no dream we can simply wake up from. And the results of our choices and missed opportunities usually have no quick fix, but require a process of recovery.

How do we live with and recover from the tattoos of life?

The Question is not: *“Can I do it over again?”* but *“Can God take my situation and make something good out of it?”* *Can He bring beauty out of ashes? And Good out of Evil?”*

The Answer is YES!

Ecc 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES

We must consider wrong choices and regretful consequences. We make poor, wrong, self-centered, sinful choices more than we are aware of. It only tends to come to our attention when we are convicted by the Holy Spirit or when we find ourselves dissatisfied or suffering as a result of those choices.

The truth for us today is this: Your life is a bigger mess than you realize and you are a bigger failure than you can possibly imagine. That is the situation with each of us, apart from God's grace working through us. We have no ability in our own and “without Him, we can do nothing”.

Q: Is it possible for a Christian to make the right choices that are pleasing to God? **A:** Yes, but it may be impossible to ever be sure. Quite simply (but not easily) Start where you are and allow God to heal, redeem, rule and redirect your life. Surrender to the Lordship of Christ. (Rom. 12:1-2)

Failure and regrets are often terms that typically come from a self focused perspective. Many have told me, they have failed, to do what they have hoped. I don't think I have ever heard anyone cry out "I've failed *God*".

When things are pleasant, we feel we have made good choices. When circumstances become unpleasant, we feel we have made poor choices. As a result, how pleasant, prosperous or personally beneficial the outcome of our choices seem to be, tend to determine whether or not we feel we have made good or bad choices.

We may have wrong choices with regretful consequences.

GOOD CHOICES AND UNPLEASANT CONSEQUENCES

We may make wrong choices, yet experience pleasing consequences. Someone may cheat on a test and receive good grades, and never get caught. A woman gets an abortion and is greatly relieved from the responsibility of motherhood. Did she make the right choice?

((It is possible to make wrong choices and yet experience pleasing consequences))

There can be good choices with unpleasant consequences.

Martin Luther chose to rebel against the Roman Catholic church by challenging their cherished doctrines and yet he was sought to be killed, imprisoned and was considered an outcast by his "church" and many of his friends. His consequences were unpleasant. Was his choice good?

In the 1950s Nate Saint, Jim Elliott, Roger Youdorian, Pete Flemming and Ed McCully chose to serve Christ by attempting to reach the savage Auca natives near Quito Ecuador and as a result of their choice, they were all killed – martyred for their faith.

Their consequences were unpleasant. Were their choices good?

Believers in Viet Nam meet in dark basements, deep in the jungles or out in the rice patties as they work under the hot sun – As they meet they pray, worship, quote scripture to one another and encourage one another in their faith. And yet in doing so, they are choosing to disobey the governmental prohibition on Christian gatherings. When they are caught their consequences are unpleasant - they are often brutally tortured. Are their choices good? Or bad?

The believers that are persecuted and tortured for their faith often give testimony that they have no regrets in their choices to gather as Christians AND that their torture, though unpleasant, was not grievous to them, but a joy.

Christians in America tend to consider unpleasant experiences to be a result of bad choices. Christians around the world however, often consider the unpleasant experiences of suffering, as the result of **good choices** to follow Christ and obey Gods holy word.

Therefore, do good and pleasant consequences men we have made a good and right choice? Not necessarily.

((We must consider our choices and how we evaluate our consequences.))

LEARN FROM OUR MISTAKES

“I must attempt to do better – make better choices”

How simple that sounds and yet how many simply do *not* learn from their life choices, mistakes, experiences, defeats and regrets.

Regrets, defeat wrong choices and missed opportunities keep us confused, stressed, and I believe, ineffective in ministry and distracted in our walk with Christ.

We must be willing to do what it takes to please God and to make life work for ourselves.

I have known people who make one bad choice after the other. Some seem to always be looking for a break or for someone to do them a favor. I have known people who, though out of work, are not willing to walk up the road to work or ride a bike to work. As a result, they sit at home and look for people to do them favors and bail them out of their mess.

It seems like some people are destined to live life in crisis mode – and not because they have made good decisions.

Most people I have known who are living life in in constant crisis ...

- 1) ...Exhibit little initiative. – expect others to come to their rescue or for help to fall from heaven.
- 2) ...Seem Unwilling to work hard.- I personally believe, when I help others, I would like to know that they are willing to work just as hard as I am.
- 3) ...Are not tithers.
- 4) ...Are not devoted to the community of believers.
- 5) ... Have been very willing to take my help, but unwilling to get help in learning how to budget sensibly, shop responsibly, and handle their money biblically.

Many people who come to the church for help, want their situation to be better, but often are not interested in changing their focus, their lifestyle or their thinking and choosing process.

Our lives are a bigger mess than we realize and we are bigger failures than we can possibly imagine. But we do not take note of our mess and our failures until they begin to cause us discomfort or create for us unpleasant circumstances. Then and only then are we willing to take action to change things.

We must learn to learn from our mistakes.

The fact is you can look up any character in the Bible and see both good and bad choices and their effects. Ultimately, it is not the choice we make or the effect it has on us, but the state of our heart and our motive for the choices we make.

We must do our best to make Godly choices and trust God for the consequences.

APPLICATION

1) Be willing to change – significantly

Eph 4:17-20 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that ***you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do***, in the futility of their minds.

(18) They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. (19) They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. (20) But that is not the way you learned Christ!--

2) Begin to put God first in everything

Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the **preeminence**.

3) Seek other mature Christians to talk over your decisions before you make them

Prov. 24:6 for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.

The All Important Change – “Gods Ways are always best”

Human reasoning does not guarantee good decisions / choices.

1) 1 Sam. 8: 6-7

Israel wanted a king more than they wanted God's best.

2) 1 Sam. 8:19-20

Israel desired to be like the other nations. The desired to be like everyone else – to measure up – to be keeping up with the progress of others

3) Eve – Gen. 3:4

1) Allowed outside input to sway her away from God's clear instruction and warning. For any of us this can come from...

- our relationships
- our possessions
- even our ministry

* Ignoring or rationalizing God's truth can bring about sin and personal regret.

4) In his writings entitled “Dangerous Decisions”, (RBC)

Dan Shaeffer makes these observations:

1) We often make long term decisions, based on short term attractions. – what looks or sounds good at the time.

Eve's choice had eternal consequences.

Israel's choice to demand a king, had greivous, long term, far reaching, disappointing reproussions.

2) We often assume our decisions will only affect ourselves.

-2 Sam. 24 – David's decisions affected all his people.

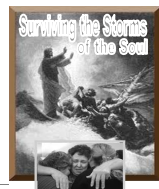
As true believing Christians we need to be careful to ...

Be filled with the Holy Spirit of God - Eph. 5:18

Follow the Leading of God's Holy Spirit – Rom. 8:14

Submit to God to search and evaluate us - Ps. 139:23-24

Don't close this booklet yet...



Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior or your soul and the Lord of your life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

--Romans 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come from
God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that
whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting
life. --John 3:16

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him to
die in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through
Jesus Christ our Lord.

-- Romans 6:23

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of Jesus
Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners,
Christ died for us. ---Romans 5:8

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." -- Rom 10:13

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the
right to become children of God,

- John 1:12

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you are
truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your sins and
citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. He already knows. Also Confess Jesus as you LORD. He desires and deserves to be your Lord.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Other Free Booklets downloadable at www.ChristEFCA.org

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1 PETER, pt. 3-5 (3Vol): *The Church God Always Wanted*

A NEW CREATION: *Beginning Your New Life In Christ*

ADVENT: *The Submission of Christ*

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May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit, in His Church and throughout our mission field.

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