

October 29, 2020

Hope for those who are discouraged. Encouragement for difficult days.

All people endure hardship and distress at some point during their lives. Many receive hardship as a cause for failure or self-pity. For Christians hardships in life should be a time of faith building as we receive the outpouring of God's magnificent grace. Read with me 1 Peter 5:6-11.

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. 11 To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Life is filled with difficulties. The struggles of life are real. How we respond to the struggles of life is exceedingly important. There are at least two ways we can respond to the struggles of life. We can give in wherein we are defeated by the ruler of this world. Or we can turn to God in faith wherein we enjoy the victory won by Jesus on Calvary and in His resurrection.

This first epistle of Peter is written as a source of encouragement to the many Christians who were being persecuted after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Persecution became a way of life for many of the early Christians; first from the Jews and then more widespread as the Roman emperors began to be jealous of the rapidly spreading Christian

faith. Moreover, as Peter was writing this epistle to the Church the Neronian persecutions were about to begin.

The struggle of life is real for all humanity. Everyone is engaged in the struggle for life. This world is filled with pitfalls, temptations, and strife. Jesus encourages the believer when He declares, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Knowing that Jesus overcame the world is a source of encouragement to Christians because it is through Jesus' victory over death, hell, and the grave that we also have hope for a better future. Paul reminds us as well, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). The ruler of this dark age has aligned his forces against the people of God: against you and me and all who believe in Jesus by faith.

Our struggle is real and we can see it everywhere. Watch the news, read the paper and we are assaulted by violence, corruption, and people being evil towards other people. This is an excellent reminder that sin is universal. This should also remind us that God's grace abounds!

The God of all grace is our heavenly Father. How can we enjoy the blessings of God's grace in our lives? Today's Scripture encourages us to do six things in the midst of the struggles of life.

We must humble ourselves. Scripture reveals, "But He [God] gives a greater grace. Therefore it [Scripture] says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble'" (James 4:6). We can learn to be humble and we must if we desire to experience God's magnificent grace.

Cast our anxiety onto Jesus. Too many people carry the burdens of life around with them like a pack filled with necessities. The burdens of life, our anxieties, only weigh us down. Learn to “Seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness, and all the necessities of life will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

Be of sober spirit. That is, be steady and balanced. Keep control over your emotions, thoughts, and feelings. Learn to be reasonable in your approach to life.

Be on the alert. This means we are to be vigilant always. The Christian must be alert to recognize and avoid giving into temptation. Our enemy is looking to compromise Christians in every way.

Resist the devil. James also encourages the Christian, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

Be firm in your faith. Christians must stand fast in their faith and not waver or be double-minded. When we learn to do these six things there are then six things God will do as well.

God calls us into relationship with Him through Jesus. God perfects us through sanctification. God confirms us with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God strengthens us [through fellowship with other believers (see Hebrews 10:23-25)]. God establishes us by His word. And God cares for us through His Son, Jesus.

Are you enduring tribulation and difficulties in life today? Know that Jesus is the way by which you can overcome the struggles of life and enjoy a relationship with the God of all grace. Let us pray.

Gracious God there are many today who are broken in spirit and need Your tender care. I pray You will send Your laborers to them so that they will know Jesus. For Your glory almighty God through Jesus we pray, amen.

Trust in Jesus and cast your burdens unto Him.

Until the nets are full