

DO YOU HAVE TIME FOR FAITH?

2007 Mark Beard

Text: Romans 5:1-5

Themes: justification, peace, access to God, rejoicing

Someone has said, “You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt, as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear, as young as your hope, as old as your despair. So long as your heart receives messages of beauty, cheer, courage, grandeur and power from the earth, from man and from the infinite, so long are you young. When the wires are all down and all the central place of your heart is covered with the snows of pessimism and the ice of cynicism, then you are grown old indeed and may God have mercy on your soul.

-- Author Unknown, quoted in *Riches for the Mind and Spirit* (ed. John Marks Templeton). *Christianity Today*, Vol. 35, no. 3.

I. BECAUSE OF CHRIST, TRIBULATION CULTIVATES STRENGTH TO COMPLETE THE JOURNEY.

A. Difficulties cultivate perseverance.

We do not want suffering; we want success. We identify not with those who are low and hurt but with those who are high and healthy. We don't like lepers or losers very well; we prefer climbers and comers. For Christians, the temptation to be conformed to this world is desperately sweet and strong. Yet, says the apostle Paul, we are children of God if we suffer with Christ. ... God does not give his hardest assignments to his weakest children.

■ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., in *Assurances of the Heart*. *Christianity Today*, Vol. 38, no. 7.

B. Difficulties cultivate character.

Oswald Chambers tells us that, “Faith is the inborn capacity to see God behind everything, the wonder that keeps you an eternal child. Wonder is the very essence of life. Beware always of losing the wonder, and the first thing that stops wonder is religious conviction. Whenever you give a trite testimony, the wonder is gone. The evidence of salvation is that the sense of wonder is developing.” -Oswald Chambers, *Leadership*, Vol. 2, no. 3.

C. Difficulties cultivate hope.

"Two men looked out from prison bars. One saw mud, one saw stars." In the pursuit of the fullness of human life, everything depends on this frame of reference, this habitual outlook, this basic vision which I have of myself, others, life, the world, and God. What we see is what we get.

■ Fr. John Powell in *Through Seasons of the Heart*. Christianity Today, Vol. 33, no. 14.

II. BECAUSE OF CHRIST, THERE IS ETERNAL HOPE AND ASSURANCE.

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." NIV

A. The love of God is in our heart.

B. The Holy Spirit is at work in our lives.

C. We belong to Him—"It was given to us."

CONCLUSION

Fred Craddock, in an address to ministers, caught the practical implications of consecration. "To give my life for Christ appears glorious," he said. "To pour myself out for others ... to pay the ultimate price of martyrdom--I'll do it. I'm ready, Lord, to go out in a blaze of glory.

"We think giving our all to the Lord is like taking a \$1,000 bill and laying it on the table--'Here's my life, Lord. I'm giving it all.'

"But the reality for most of us is that he sends us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents

here and 50 cents there. Listen to the neighbor kid's troubles instead of saying, 'Get lost.' Go to a committee meeting. Give up a cup of water to a shaky old man in a nursing home.

"Usually giving our life to Christ isn't glorious. It's done in all those little acts of love, 25 cents at a time. It would be easy to go out in a flash of glory; it's harder to live the Christian life little by little over the long haul."

-- Darryl Bell, Maple Grove, Minnesota. Leadership, Vol. 5, no. 4.