

HOW TO LIVE IN TROUBLED TIMES

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Text: Hebrews 10:23-25

An old woodsman gives this advice about catching a porcupine: "Watch for the slapping tail as you dash in and drop a large washtub over him. The washtub will give you something to sit on while you ponder your next move." *Bits & Pieces*, September, 1989.

Recent events have given us a great deal to ponder. Just when it would seem that we in America had the best of all worlds and the most hopeful prospects our world is shaken up. Trouble has come to our homeland like we have never known in our lifetime. In addition, from what I am hearing few really know what to do with the uncertainty of our times.

The Christians to whom the writer of Hebrews was writing were facing their own set of difficulties. According to historians, these were the people who were seeing their contemporaries thrown to the lions in the great arena. Persecution was great and death was a real possibility. But the writer of Hebrews offered them comfort, hope and encouragement in the words of our text.

Note with me the *actions* the writer of Hebrews encourages them, as well as us, to take in order for every Christian to remain steadfast in our commitment to Christ in the times of trouble.

I. WE MUST HOLD FIRM TO OUR FAITH IN CHRIST (v. 23).

A. We have placed our trust in the Lord for times such as these.

We cannot allow fear of the future and hopelessness about events to cause us to doubt. God is still in control and we still have access to His divine help.

B. All our hopes and faith are based on the secure foundation of Christ.

Even in a shaky world God remains unshaken and in control.

C. Everett Koop former U.S. Surgeon General said, “We grow and mature spiritually through adversity—not when everything is going smoothly. ... [I]n a time of adversity or trouble, the Christian has the opportunity to know God in a special and personal way.”

-- C. Everett Koop former U.S. Surgeon General. Leadership, Vol. 15, no. 4.

II. WE MUST SEEK TO ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER (v. 24).

A. We have a great opportunity to show the love of God.

Too often in difficult situations we tend to focus on our own needs and wants in an attempt to preserve our own individual world; but the love of God rarely shines brighter than when we show it to others in dark times.

Booker T. Washington said, “Wherever our life touches yours, we help or hinder ... wherever your life touches ours, you make us stronger or weaker. ... There is no escape--man drags man down, or man lifts man up.” --

Booker T. Washington, *Christian Reader*, Vol. 35, no. 2.

B. We have a great opportunity to do good for God.

Troubled times are one of the best times for *visible* Christianity.

Someone wrote this about problems:

1. Problems often provide us with greater opportunities
2. Problems can promote our spiritual maturity (Ps 105:16ff)
3. Problems prove our integrity (1 Pt 3:15)
4. Problems produce a sense of dependence
5. Problems prepare our hearts for ministry (more empathetic)

Source Unknown <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/a/adversity.htm>

III. WE MUST GATHER TOGETHER FOR WORSHIP AND STRENGTH (v. 25).

A. We need to draw upon the spiritual strength found in worship.

Feeling pushed pressured and fatigued by the events of difficult days can leave us with little desire to get out one more time at the end of the week for church.

B. We need the encouragement that the community of faith offers.

Someone said, “No problem is ever as dark when you have a friend to face it with you.” Anonymous. Men of Integrity, Vol. 1, no. 1.

CONCLUSION

The emblem of the state of Kentucky shows two men facing each other shaking hands. The motto beneath reads: "United we stand, divided we fall." That could well be the motto of a nation, a congregation, or a family.

-- Robert C. Shannon, 1000 Windows, (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing Company, 1997).

We must not become alienated from one another or isolated in our faith. We must purpose in our hearts to take the *actions* necessary to insure our spiritual stability.