

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

Volume 12, Issue 3

March 2014

Got Problems?

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Introduction

We all face problems everyday. Some are bigger than others. These are facts of life. But, what is strange to me is the way that a large portion of believers view problems. It seems that the extremes of the word-faith movement have indoctrinated many with the belief that a “true” believer shouldn't have any problems. The teaching seems to be that if you are truly walking in faith and confessing God's promises then you will not encounter problems—a trouble free life is the blessing of God. Some even believe that encountering problems means that you are straying from the Lord's will and problems are His way of stopping you from making mistakes. However, is that the teaching of Scripture?

Just reading the great faith chapter of Hebrews 11 tells us that all of those who sought the Lord experienced tremendous difficulties in realizing the fulfillment of God's promises to them. After speaking of the faith exploits of several individuals, the writer of Hebrews goes on to speak collectively of the nature of those who are seeking the promises of God.

and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ([Hebrews 11:36-39 NASB](#))

This sounds to me like a list of major problems, difficulties, and obstacles that had to be faced and overcome. This is certainly a long way from a “trouble free lifestyle” being espoused by the “faith” teachers who are filling the people of God with “success ethics”.

Categories of Problems

The Scriptures directly contradict the “be a success in life” preachers with what Paul said to Timothy.

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12 NASB)

Persecution is a fact of life if you are desiring to live Godly in Christ. This is the first category of problems that face every believer that wants to walk in the Spirit.

Dictionary definition of PERSECUTE

to harass or punish in a manner designed to injure, grieve, or afflict; specifically: to cause to suffer because of belief

As Christians, what we believe and how we put that belief into practice is in conflict with the world system and its practices. As a result, those who follow the precepts of the world, who walk by sight and not faith will persecute those who walk by faith and follow the precepts of the Kingdom of God.

The next arena of problems is what the Scriptures call “tribulations”. (*Dictionary definition: tribulation: grievous trouble; severe trial or suffering.*) Tribulations are an unavoidable fact of life for those who pursue the purpose of God. Paul and Barnabas on their return missionary journey were

strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22 NASB)

As we seek the Kingdom of God (*which was commanded by Jesus, Matthew 6:33*) we encounter many tribulations. This is why we need to be encouraged to continue in the faith.

Jesus specifically told us that we would have tribulations as long as we are in this world.

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33 NASB)

The encouragement is that Jesus has overcome the world and its tribulation and that if we are in Him, we, too, can overcome the world's tribulations.

Struggling against and overcoming tribulations produces characteristics in us that are necessary to our maturing in the Lord. Paul said that we should “exult” in tribulations because of their value to our development.

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Romans 5:3-5 NASB)

The third arena of problems is what the Scriptures call “trials”. (*Dictionary definition: trial: the act of trying, testing, or putting to the proof; a test of faith, patience, or stamina through subjection to suffering or temptation.*) There is a difference between trials and tribulations. Tribulation type of problems are designed to produce something in us as we overcome them through the power of the Holy Spirit. Trial type of problems are designed to put us to the test, to try our faith just as James said.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the

testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. ([James 1:2-4 NASB](#))

The last thing that we want is to be tested. However, it is absolutely necessary if we want to mature. Testing reveals what is in our hearts. We don't know our own hearts because we deceive ourselves and think more highly of ourselves than we should. God shows us our hearts by allowing circumstances or problems to arise that put faith, obedience and/or understanding to the test thereby revealing the conditions of our heart. God tested the children of Israel when He lead them through the wilderness in order to show them their heart. [[Deut.18:2](#)] He does the same thing with us.

So, problems come in three arenas: 1) persecution, 2) tribulations, and 3) trials. Each problem arena has different methodologies for handling the issues. Wisdom is knowing how to face each type of problem. The Lord intends for us to overcome because He has overcome the world. In the book of Revelation, the promises are only made to those who overcome. It is imperative that we face our problems head on and gain victory over them. If we need wisdom about how to deal with the problem we need to ask God for it [[James 1:5](#)].

When facing a problem or obstacle we need to remember the promise of God:

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him. ([James 1:12 NASB](#))

Notice that this promise has a procedure, that is, a process, by which it comes to fulfillment in our lives: 1) trial, 2) perseverance, 3) approval, 4) receiving the fulfillment of the promise. You see from this that there is a reason that Paul says “exult” in tribulations and James says to “count it all joy” when we encounter various trials. All of our problems are working to mature us in the Lord because “. . . we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.” ([Romans 8:28 NASB](#))

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