**Jesus is Always with Me**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**2 Corinthians 4:7-15**

**Sunday Morning**

**July 16, 2023**

**2 Corinthians 4:7-15**

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-- 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death is working in us, but life in you. 13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.

15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

**The World in which we Live is Characterized by Adversity**

Everywhere we look there are disasters, tragedies, trauma, misery, suffering, and loss.

**1. But what happens when our view of adversity becomes up close and personal?**

**2. How does the Lord want us to respond when we come face to face with trials?**

**3. And what is He trying to teach us through our difficulties?**

**2 Corinthians 11:23-28**

23 Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness-- 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

**Why would the Lord allow Paul, the man who introduced the Roman world to Jesus Christ, to suffer like this and be killed?**

**4. All Adversity is not Bad**

From a human perspective, Paul’s suffering may seem unfair, but God used his hardships and pain to accomplish His will.

During his imprisonment in Rome, Paul wrote to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

And his letter to the Philippians was filled with joy because he understood that through adversity God accomplishes His divine purposes and works for our ultimate good.

**Characteristics of Adversity**

**1. Adversity is Universal**

It’s everywhere and can affect any area of our lives

**2. It’s Impartial**

Saints, because we live in a fallen world, trouble comes to all of us—even believers—no matter what our financial or educational status.

**3. Adversity is Painful**

Saints, the pain can be physical, emotional, or relational, but whatever the source, it hurts.

**4. Sometimes Adversity comes Suddenly**

Saints, life could be going on as normal when an accident or a negative report from the doctor leaves us unexpectedly devastated.

**5. Times of Adversity may be Prolonged**

Sometimes the emotional or physical pain continues for years.

**6. It may be Intense**

We may hurt so badly that even those who try to bring comfort feel the pain.

**7. Adversity is Often Beyond our Control**

Saints, we may feel helpless and have no answer for why God would allow us to go through it.

**Questions Regarding Adversity**

Saints, when adversity leaves us confused, we often ask two primary questions:

**Why?**

Saints, even Jesus asked this question when He was hanging on the cross,

**Matthew 27:46**

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Saints, the Lord is compassionate toward our pain and understands our limited perspective and confusion, but He also knows the good He intends to accomplish through our adversity because He sees the future.

Sometimes He reveals His purpose to us, but often we won’t understand until we’re in heaven. In the meantime, we can trust Him, knowing He always works for our best.

**Who?**

We usually want to know who caused our trouble or pain, and there are three possibilities!

**Often, the “Who” is Me, Satan, or God**

God has established the principle of sowing and reaping. If we sin against the Lord or others, adversity may be the consequence of our choices. The decisions we made in the past have led us to where we are today.

**Satan oh Slew Foot**

He hates God’s people. The book of Job reveals that he could be causing our distress.

**God**

Saints, the Lord is sovereign and He controls all adversity in our lives.

That’s why it’s important to remember how much He loves us. If He allows us to go through pain, suffering, or loss, then He has something good He wants to accomplish in us.

When the apostle Paul understood that his “thorn in the flesh” was designed to keep him humble and dependent on Christ, he was able to say,

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10**

9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**Responses to Adversity**

Depending on our response, hardships and suffering will either drive us to the Lord or away from Him.

**Blame**

We could respond by looking for someone to blame, but this approach only intensifies our anger until we become bitter.

**Escape**

Another option is to try to avoid pain and problems by dulling our senses. Although drowning our sorrows with alcohol, taking drugs, or engaging in sexual affairs may seem like the answer, it only complicates our lives and leads to more problems.

**Denial**

If we claim that all is well when it isn’t, we will continue to suffer internal hurt and anger.

**Self-Pity**

A pity party never accomplishes anything positive. It simply displays an unwillingness to take responsibility for the situation and our response to it.

**Seek the Lord**

We ought to come to God with our confusion and pain, asking Him to help us trust Him. He doesn’t take delight in our suffering but wants to use it to achieve what’s best for us.

**Isaiah 55:6**

“Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near”

**Proverbs 8:17**

“I love those who love me, And those who seek me diligently will find me”

**Luke 11:9-10**

9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Saints, principles to Help Us Through Adversity If we’re confident of the Lord’s love for us and understand how He uses adversity in our lives, we will be able to trust Him and respond in a way that benefits us.

**Adversity is one of God’s most Effective Tools for Strengthening our Faith**

If we focus on the ways He is working within us and enabling us to endure affliction, our trust in Him will grow even if our circumstances stay the same.

**The Lord Sends Adversity to Help Us, not to Hurt Us**

God’s purpose for allowing pain is to achieve something good. He may be trying to correct us or produce godly character in us. In the case of the apostle Paul, God protected him from pride and taught him to depend on Christ.

**2 Corinthians 12:7-9**

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

**God is Always with Us**

We may not feel His presence, but He has promised to never leave or forsake us.

**Hebrews 13:5**

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Saints, as believers, we have been united with Christ, and His Spirit lives within us.

**Adversity can be a Precious Gift from the Lord**

Saints, pain and hardship are the instruments He often uses to correct our thinking, turn us around, and guide us onto His path.

**The Guidebook for Adversity**

Saints, the Word of God shows us how-to walk-through times of adversity

It reminds us of His love, tells us about His purposes for trials, encourages us to endure, and strengthens us in the process

One of the primary reasons we struggle in adversity and give in to despair and hopelessness is ignorance of the Scriptures.

The Lord wants to help us through affliction, but we must open His Word to receive His guidance, comfort, and assurance.

**1. As you look back at past adversity, what greater understanding have you gained about God’s character, promises, and purposes?**

**2. What principles have you learned from God’s Word that will help you respond to your trials as He desires?**

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**