

Focus on the Lord

3/28/08

CONTENTS When we are in the midst of chaotic circumstances, problems and obstacles start igniting like bonfires across the landscape. The human reaction is to try to put out each fire, but the more we try, new ones are formed. When the realization sets in that we are not even keeping up with the growing problems, panic sets in. Which fires should you fight? How will you fight them? What if you cannot put them out? Frustration, discouragement, and despair begin to affect our lives and it seems like we have begun a downward spiral.

Satan is not the source of all our problems, but he can sure capitalize on them at times. In fact, leaning on our own understanding and working in our own strength contribute to a large percentage of our problems. Once we begin to experience the consequences of fleshly decisions we have made, our enemy comes along and suggests to our thoughts that it is God's fault for letting it happen, it is someone else's fault or we are losers and misfits that do not deserve to have any victories in life. The enemy will urge us to move fast to rectify the situation before things become worse and then before we realize it we end up digging ourselves a deeper hole than before. The enemy may even reveal himself to some during this period in order to paralyze them with fear because he is involved and trying to destroy them.

Looking objectively at the whole scenario, many of the problems originated because of a lack of focus on the Lord in the first place, (seeking His guidance) and then the problems accelerated even greater because focus on the Lord was not established during the crisis. The enemy will go out of his way to keep a person's attention on the problems, the circumstances or the enemy, so that people will not turn to their real source of strength, the Lord.

Focusing on the Lord after a number of problems have developed is not always easy. Thoughts are racing through the mind, there is a great deal of anxiety, there is much confusion and distraction and frankly, you do not feel very spiritual at that moment in time. But this is when it is crucial to stop everything, step back to get a more objective view of the circumstance and then begin to follow the principles that God has revealed in His word. Paul's advice to the Philippians in chapter four can be of great help at this time.

1. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." (4:4) In other words, begin to celebrate the Lord, for He is greater than any problem that we can face. Even though you may not feel like it, you must direct your faith to the character and attributes of our God. He is loving and compassionate (He cares), He is all-knowing and all-powerful. He is full of grace (unmerited favor) and mercy. Begin to "rejoice in Him."

2. "The Lord is near." (4:5) He is near because His Spirit is in those who have received Jesus as Savior. He is near because He has promised to hear and answer those who trust Him and obey His commands. (Jn 15:7) He is near because He will not leave us to fend for ourselves. (Heb 13:5)

3. "Do not worry about anything. . ." (4:6) First of all, what will worrying accomplish? Secondly, worry shows that we are not trusting the Lord to help us. Choose to trust Him no matter what happens. Is not our faith in Him more important than possessions? How long will our possessions last us anyway? They are insignificant in comparison to

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eternity.

4. ". . . with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." (4:6)

- Thank God for who He is, for Jesus' sacrifice, for the victory we have in Jesus, for the Holy Spirit that has been given to us, for the promises that God has given us, for God's faithfulness to us in the past and for the future we have with Him forever.. (Spend time praising God - it may be difficult in the circumstances, but if you will persevere, the freedom to praise will come.) Praise will empower your prayer. It will increase your faith. It can renew your strength and help you see God's perspective. And praise can put Satan on the run!
- After you have praised and thanked God, make your requests known to God. Present your case to Him. Let Him know what you want, why you want it and how it will bring glory to Him.

5. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (4:7) Now wait for God's peace to come. He has promised that He would guard your hearts and minds with it. Most people finish their time with the Lord before His peace comes. If you have to wait fifteen minutes, a half-hour or more than an hour, wait until it comes. It will be worth it!!! Many have missed this blessing because they were anxious to see something happen or to do something. But if His transforming peace does not come, you will not fully be prepared for what God wants to do with you from that point on.

It is this biblical process that our enemy wants to keep us from. He will press us to do something now so that we do not get a chance to "rest in the Lord."

". . . let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:1-2)