

Lenten Devotional Week Four: Hope

March 7, 2021

“Do not be afraid or discouraged ... For the battle is not yours, but God’s!”

2 Chronicles 20:15

This bible verse has become a daily mantra for me. The past several years have presented me with some of the most difficult challenges of my life. Since I’m such a “type A” personality, I struggled just as much with not being in control of the situation as I did with the situation itself. This personality trait is one that I share with many entrepreneurs.

We’re all so used to being in control of and responsible for the operations of our business, that it is often challenging for us to “let go, and let God.” However, I find great comfort in this verse from 2nd Chronicles. It gives me the ultimate permission—a directive, actually—that our Father has got our backs and He is in control.

Especially when being faced with the extraordinary difficulties that we are all living with today, strength and calmness comes through prayer and following God’s directive to “not be afraid or discouraged ... the battle is not yours, but God’s”. We can always be assured that God holds us in His hands and protects us during these “battles.”

By Marcia Gardy

Heavenly Hope

We don't have to be stressed out or troubled in our hearts because, as Christians, our destination is eternal life in Heaven. No matter what happens, no one can rob us of that great hope. Maybe you've lost your job or your car won't start. Maybe you have all kinds of problems in your life right now, but you are still going to Heaven. The apostle Paul encouraged the church with these words:

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our inner strength in the Lord is growing every day. These troubles and sufferings of ours are, after all, quite small and won't last very long. Yet this short time of distress will result in God's richest blessing upon us forever and ever! So we do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all around us, but we look forward to the joys in Heaven which we have not yet seen. The troubles will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever. *2 Corinthians 4:16-18, The Living Bible*

Jesus promises that there is a real place called Heaven, and you have His word on it - the surest word in the entire universe. Now when Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many mansions," I don't believe He was speaking of a celestial Beverly Hills with beautiful, palatial mansions for those who live really godly lives on Earth. The Amplified Bible renders this verse: "In My Father's house there are many dwelling places (or homes)." (*John 14:2*) Who can begin to imagine what these "homes" or "dwelling places" will be like? All I know is that Jesus Himself, the One who created the universe with all its wonders, has been working on preparing a place for us for more than 2,000 years. I agree with Paul when he wrote:

"No mere man has ever seen, heard, or even imagined what wonderful things God has ready for those who love the Lord" (*2 Corinthians 2:9*)

Jesus has promised us that we will be together with Him in Heaven, for eternity, in the place He has prepared for us. And He will keep His word.

Written by Greg Laurie

Submitted in memory of Jerry Sprouse

Joy In Calamity

Satan tempts us to bring out the worst in us; God tests us to bring out the best in us.

Count it all joy when you fall into various trials. *James 1:2*

Celebrate bankruptcy? How foolish that seems to us! Yet author Leo Buscaglia's mother did just that. Her husband came home one evening and sadly told the family that his business partner had stolen the assets of the firm. Bankruptcy was unavoidable.

Instead of despairing, Leo's mother went out, pawned some jewelry, and prepared a delectable dinner. When family members protested, she replied, "The time for joy is now when we need it most, not next week."

Mrs. Buscaglia's response to her family's financial crisis reminds me of a New Testament directive: "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2). Have you run into difficult circumstances recently? Has some calamity gripped your heart with fear and sorrow? God doesn't want you to wear a hypocritical, smiling face. But He does want you to trust Him through all your circumstances -- including calamities! He wants you to accept failure, sickness, and loss as opportunities for growth in faith and obedience.

Our wise and loving heavenly Father longs for us to submit to His sovereign control. Only as we do that can we agree with James and rejoice even in calamity.

By Vernon Grounds (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI.)

Submitted by Marcia Gardy