

FEW DAYS AND FULL OF TROUBLE

A Study of Human Frailty

“Man that is born of a woman is of few days,
and full of trouble” (Job 14:1)

Tim Smith

Who among us could not echo the words of the troubled man of old? Have not we all experienced our share of troubles and trials through the years? Who among us has lost no loved ones, suffered no tragedy, experienced no illness? Have not we all had days that reminded us of our own physical limitations? Certainly these words and their truth are constantly brought before our minds. How many times have we heard men ask, with Job, “Is there iniquity in my tongue? Cannot my taste discern perverse things” (Job 6:30)? Job sought meaning in the various things he suffered, he clung to every possible explanation. He sought an end to his sufferings, wondering if they would ever leave him:

Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling? As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, when shall I arise, and the night be gone? And I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust: my skin is broken, and become loathsome. My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent without hope (Job 7:1-6).

What is the meaning of our suffering? When we hurt, are we to assume God quit caring for us? Does pain indicate the absence of righteousness? I think not, for every servant of God through the ages experienced his bad times as well as his good. The psalmist encouraged us to use our troubles as a motivation to godliness: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psalms 90:12). When we are faced with difficulties, let us be reminded of the reward. When we are faced with loss, let us be reminded of the ultimate gain in Christ. When we wonder where we are and why we are there and if there is truly rest at the end of the way, let us turn to Him with Whom we have to do, and let us humble ourselves under His Mighty Hand that in due time we might be exalted.

Oftentimes I try to do all that needs doing only to find myself with more things to do than time allows. The midnight oil is burned, the extra mile is traveled, every effort is made; but, in the end, something must be left undone. What to do? Quit? Never! We must do what we are able to do, relying on ourselves to discipline our efforts according to the standard set forth in the New Testament, and not worry about what we were unable to do. If I had the time, I would love to visit every house in Houston County Alabama and teach the gospel to every resident of every house personally, and with this I would have every bulletin to be the very best possible, every newspaper article a work of art and every television show the best ever

produced, all of the Bible Class material (without mistakes) written and printed and distributed, every sermon prepared to a tee with every verse memorized in English and Greek, and at the same time be a good husband, father, son, uncle, neighbor and citizen. But, there simply is no time to do all of these to perfection. I have decided (long ago) to give attention to the things I am able to do, do them well, and pray that the things that are left undone will be done by others. This is all any of us can do.

We may well bemoan the things lacking in the church and etc., for many years, but let us remember that it does not require much effort (nor “smarts” for that matter) to figure out what is wrong in a given situation, what requires effort and “smarts” in finding a way to remedy the problem. If I do all I can do, and you do all you can do, what more can we do? Let us pray, let us work, let us encourage, and let us start now!

There are many things that need doing in the church, as there are many things that need doing in any congregation; we have lost many good workers through the years. When these two things are brought to bear on a congregation at the same time, and in relatively short order, things do get “tight.” But that just means we that are “alive and remain” must be about the business at hand. Let discouragement have no place among us! Roll up those sleeves and “To the work, to the work, we are servants of God, let us follow the path that our Master has trod.” Our Lord did not quit when his apostles left him. Paul did not quit when his fellow-servants abandoned him, and what about poor Stephen? When all was down he still did what was needful to be done. Will we not do the same, and under much less severe conditions?

Jesus Christ loved each of us enough to die for us; let us return that love by living for Him. “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations” (Psalms 67:1-2). Have you totally dedicated yourself to the work of the Lord? I pray that you have, and I pray you many years of fruitful service in his Vineyard. But, if you are holding back something that could be used to the benefit of the Kingdom, will you not come forth and serve? Teach a class, teach a friend, mail a tract, invite someone to services, tell others about our bulletin and newspaper articles. Use what talents you have in His service. Like those praised of Paul in the first century, give yourself to the Lord. Say with Jesus, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). There will come a time when your last chance to offer service will have passed. Will you be ready to be examined in that day for how you have served in this day?

~Deceased

