

## "Standing Strong In Adversity"

Isaiah 30: 15-21

Understanding adversity and learning how to recognize and appreciate God's purposes for difficulties is a lesson that all of us will learn but it is how that we respond in the times of adversity that will determine our outcome.

**The KJV dictionary defines adversity as an event, or series of events, which oppose success or desire; misfortune; calamity; affliction; distress; or a state of unhappiness.**

**It defines to afflict as to give to the body or mind pain which is continued or of some permanence; to grieve, or to distress.**

**The word that is translated to be strong, literally means to be courageous, valiant, established, firm, fortified, mighty, or strengthened.**

It is found in Joshua 1:9 and it is a reaffirmation of a command that the Lord had given to Joshua. There are a wide range of meanings for this word that is used over 300 times in the OT. It can mean to encourage such as David did in 1 Sam. 30:6, where it says that David encouraged himself in the Lord, His God.

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Josh. 1:9)

**Teaching Point: Encouragement is that which the one that has been encouraged draws from to make him or her strong in the time of need!!**

Far too many saints want to live off of encouraging words and they are needed and they are great but they are of no value if the person that is being encouraged does not make them applicable to their situation or life.

**Teaching Point: The greatest source of encouragement is the Word of God and sometimes, it is the last source where we look to!!**

"For whatever was thus written in former days was written for our instruction, that by [our steadfast and patient] endurance and the encouragement [drawn] from the Scriptures we might hold fast and cherish hope." (Rom. 15:4)

From this, we learn to regularly practice Scripture memorization and meditation. If we then determine beforehand to put them into practice, this promises success. But in our text, we see that Israel had a great tendency and desire to do things their own way and it often did not turn out well for them. We are going to

see the progression of sin taking control of someone's life and making them pay a far too steep of a price in the process.

**I just lost a great deal of my audience right there when I used the word sin but Romans 14:23, says, "For whatever does not originate and proceed from faith is sin [whatever is done without a conviction of its approval by God is sinful]."**

So, trying to obtain and operate in courage without a conviction that it is the will of God for your life is a recipe for disaster. This what happened to Judah in our read text for tonight. In our text today, Isaiah is speaking to Judah concerning her trust in the swift horses of Egypt rather than in God that would result in them left alone as a pole on top of a mountain, which is symbolic of a tree that is stripped of its branches.

**This leads me to my first point, which is that we have to first begin to see where we have left the arc of safety of the Lord and to do so requires us to see how vital is the Word of God in your life.**

Verse 15 says, "In returning [to Me] and resting [in Me] you shall be saved; in quietness and in [trusting] confidence shall be your strength." We return to the Lord by meditating, studying, reading the Word of God and by praying unto the Lord for guidance and protection. It is amazing how easy it is for us to trust in everything but God and yet not realize that we have done so. Psalm 20:7 says, "Some trust in and boast of chariots and some of horses, but we will trust in and boast of the name of the Lord our God." We don't have horses or chariots today but it was viewed as the nation or warrior that had the most horses or chariots had far superior skills and abilities for success than others. We tend to boast of our achievements in life than we do the God that put those gifts and talents in us in the first place. Our success is in actuality, God calling for what He had placed in us to come forth for us and His glory.

**Next, verse 18, says, "And therefore the Lord [earnestly] waits [expecting, looking, and longing] to be gracious to you; and therefore He lifts Himself up, that He may have mercy on you and show loving-kindness to you."**

Here is a year's worth of revelation and praise unto God, if we can catch it. Because we have said that we won't do what God requires of us, He allows us to go the way of our desires but at an appropriate time that He has set for Himself, He will elevate Himself up beyond our trespasses and sins so that He can be gracious to us. God is expecting, looking, and longing to be gracious to us but He need our cooperation in the matter.

He wants us to [earnestly] wait for him, and to look and long for Him [for His victory, His favor, His peace, His joy, and His matchless, unbroken companionship]!

**Teaching Point: God is looking for someone who wants Him as much as He wants them and your life will become like a match that is made in heaven.**

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are blameless toward Him." (2 Chronicles 16:9)

- **Verse 19 says, O people who dwell in Zion at Jerusalem, you will weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you."**

Zion is both described as the city of God, as well as the people of God, and Jerusalem is called the city of David, and David is called a man after God's heart, and a man of praise. We dwell in God and God dwells, abides [lives, marry us] in our praise. God wants to be gracious unto you but He needs to hear your cry unto Him; not just your crying before Him.

**Catch the revelation here: If all that you do is cry before the Lord; He doesn't know if His presence makes you sad or wish that He would leave you because He is looking for those who will cry out to Him.**

You may be asking, "Pastor, how do I cry out to Him?" Open your mouth and say, "Father, I have a situation here and I have seen how you told me to do things but I am now under pressure and this thing isn't releasing like you said that it would. Help Me, Father!!

"And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide Himself any more, but your eyes will constantly behold your Teacher. And your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way; walk in it, when you turn to the right hand and when you turn to the left." (Isa. 30: 20-21)

Verses 20-21, holds the paradox that we often find ourselves caught in and it puzzles and frustrates the life out of us and I hope to be able to shed a little light on this matter before I take my seat. It seems a little hard to understand why the Lord that wants to lift Himself up to be gracious unto us and to show His loving-kindness to us; would give us the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. Now, let me paint a negative picture to you in hopes of helping you understand how this plays out in our minds. In old pictures about men or women that are in prison, bread and water is viewed as a sign of intense isolation and punishment. They could not starve a prisoner, so they gave him just enough to keep him or her alive so that they would cry out in desperation for help by conforming to the rules and guidelines. God does not give us the bread of adversity and the water of affliction to break us but to awaken us. To what? you may ask and I will answer.

- **He awakens us to our Teacher, the men and women of God who gives you divine guidance and instructions for your life.**
- **He awakens you to your Master Teacher; the Holy Spirit, who will guide you into all truths and will bring all things back to your memory.**

"I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit." (Eph. 3:16 NLT)

**Teaching Point: God always sends restoration, where there has been true repentance!**

"For the Lord has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from the hand of him who was too strong for Him. They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion and shall flow together and be radiant with joy over the goodness of the Lord--for the corn, for the juice [of the grape], for the oil, and for the young of the flock and the herd. And their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow or languish any more at all. Then will the maidens rejoice in the dance, and the young men and old together. For I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and make them rejoice after their sorrow." (Jer. 31: 11-13)

"Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachael is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more. Thus says the Lord: Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord; and [your children] shall return from the enemy's land. And there is hope for your future, says the Lord; your children shall come back to their own country." (Jer. 31: 15-17)

"Therefore all who devour you will be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, will go into captivity. And they who despoil you will become a spoil, and all who prey upon you will I give for a prey. For I will restore health to you and I will heal your wounds, says the Lord, because they have called you an outcast, saying, "his is Zion, whom no one seeks after and for whom no one cares! Thus says the Lord: Behold, I will release from captivity the tents of Jacob and have mercy on his dwelling places; the city will be rebuilt on its own [old] mound-like site, and the palace will be dwelt in after its former fashion. Out of them [city and palace] will come songs of thanksgiving and the voices of those who make merry. And I will multiply them and they will not be few; I will also glorify them, and they will not be small." (Jer. 30: 16-19)

**Teaching Point: Stand strong in adversity because there is health and healing, and release and restoration, and songs of thanksgiving and merry voices coming your way, in Jesus' name!!!**