

## Lesson 5 - "Four Actions We Should Take Because of Adversity"

Sunday, February 14, 2010

Lesson Scripture: Proverbs 3:12; James 4:6; Romans 3:23; 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9;  
Proverbs 18:24; 17:17; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3:6; Matthew 6:31-33

Today's lesson has two objectives. The first is to answer the question "Am I walking in God's will?" and secondly, "What happens if I get off course?" As we drive around the city we see a lot of road construction going on. Sometimes we are required to take a different route which causes us to make a change or correction in our travel plans. Living the Christian life is similar to our travel corrections in that there are certain things that we may need to correct to stay on track. The Lord always requires His children to make changes in at least four areas. They are: "Pride and Humility", "Sinfulness in our Life", Friendships that are Harmful", and "Evaluation of our Priorities". Many times these areas are deeply embedded in our life and we fail to recognize them as being a part of the overall problem. When we read our Bible, we need to ask God to show us how the passage affects our life and what we need to do in order to be faithful to His commandments and to be in His will. Remember, God allows adversity to come our way because He loves us. Proverbs 3:11-12 (KJV) encourages us to remember "*My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction: For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.*" Parents should teach their children what is good, acceptable, and beneficial to them. They should also teach them what is bad, unacceptable, and harmful. If they do not teach them properly, then the children will grow up with bad behaviors and will be alienated from those who might be able to help them. This may also be the cause of further adversity in the parent's life. God wants us to be disciplined and mature adults in the faith. He wants us to experience inner peace, enjoy relationships with other believers, and receive the blessings that He has for us. Additionally, God also wants us to live a fruitful life. The analogy of the relationship of believers to Christ is found in John 15:1-11. We should use this to help us understand where our strength comes from. We should also understand that God has to "prune" us from time to time in order to eliminate those areas that are not producing good fruit. The first area we need to look at is...

**"Pride and Humility"** - James 4:6, Matthew 23:12, and 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:5 present a very clear picture on how God feels and what He does concerning pride and humility in our life. His Word says "*...God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.*" In other Scripture passages God hates pride (Proverbs 8:13). In Proverbs 6:17-19 it is identified as an abomination to God and is placed in the same category as murder. When we have pride in our life, it separates us from God (not God from us). He can not use us for His purposes. We in essence prevent God from being able to work in our life. Pride places the focus on us rather than God. We must remember that without God, we can not do anything. He is the One who gives us the ability and strength to do the things we can accomplish today. Pride gives credit to us rather than to God whom it rightfully belongs to. We should also be careful to ensure that we do not have a haughty spirit which is placing ourselves above others and /or taking credit that rightfully belongs to others. When adversity strikes, it may be the result of God allowing it to happen in order to get our attention concerning pride in our life. He may want us to get rid of the pride in our life and to become humble before Him. Proverbs 13:10 says "*By pride comes nothing but strife, But with the well-advised is wisdom.*"

Has pride caused strife in your life? Would humility have changed things?

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The second area we need to look at is...

**"Sinfulness in Our Life"** - God does not play games when it comes to sin in our life. His position is that we are either evil or righteous. There are no gray areas. We are either a sinner or we are saved.

It all depends on what we do with Jesus Christ's shedding of His blood, His death on the cross, and His resurrection. If we accept it, ask for His forgiveness of our sins, and ask Him to save us, then we are moved from being a sinner to being saved. As long as we shut the door to Christ, we are outside of God's kingdom. He still loves us and will call us. The Holy Spirit will still attempt to draw us to God. But until we make that commitment, we are outside of God's will and can not receive His blessing and benefit for our life. There are those who hope that God will allow them to have a "little sin" in their life even though they recognize it as sin. We need to remember one thing. If there is any sin in our life, God can not work through or help us. Why? Because we have alienated ourselves from Him! Romans 3:23 tells us that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". This verse alone should compel us to do something about the sin in our life. We all know that we have a human nature that resorts back to sin. When this happens we need to come to God and ask Him to change our human nature so that we will not want to commit that sin again. In John 8:3-11, Jesus told a woman who was caught in sin to "Go and sin no more". God wants us to hate sin and its consequences and to turn from evil at every opportunity. The good news found in 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9 is that when we confess our sins to the Father, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Another promise we can claim is found in Proverbs 28:13 where it says "He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy."

Has there been a time when you tried to cover your sins? What was the result?  
 Why are we commanded to confess and forsake sin, rather than just one or the other?

The third area we need to look at is...

**"Friendships that are Harmful"** - Sometimes when the Lord allows adversity to come our way, it may be His way of getting our attention because of the people we associate with. Some individuals in our lives could be causing us to stray further away from God. He has seen it where we have not. He could be telling us to find some new Christian friends. God's design for mankind is that we need friendship; other people that will help and encourage us as we travel through life. Not only do we need them, but they need us just as much. Being all alone is a terrible situation to be in. David and Jonathan are our example for true friendship. 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 19:1 - 20:42 records David and Jonathan's friendship. Several behaviors can be seen in this story that attests their love for each other. Jonathan warned David of possible danger (19:1-3); spoke well of David to Saul when Saul indicated his hatred for David (19:4); sought to help David (20:4); risked his life for David (20:32-33); and helped David escape death (20:35-41). David bowed down three times to Jonathan acknowledging him as the prince and then they hugged each other. Jonathan expressed a desire that the Lord be between each of them and their families (20:42). Paul describes in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13 the different qualities that make up Christian friendship (see the chart below).

Quality	Verse	Quality	Verse	Quality	Verse	Quality	Verse
Patience	4	Kind	4	Humble	4	Polite	5
Selfless	5	Relaxed	5	Positive	5	Generous	6
Truth	6	Supportive	7	Hopeful	7	Enduring	7

Love such as this never fails and Christian friendships do not create adversity. Good friendships are God's blessings being bestowed on us while here on earth. If we are not careful, bad associations will cause us to gradually turn away from the Lord and His commandments. We must set aside all bad associations and make good ones that will help us to walk in God's ways. Another example of a good friend is that the friend will stick with you when you are going through times of adversity. Two verses in the book of Proverbs tell us "...a friend sticks closer than a brother" (18:24) and "A friend loves at all times..." (17:17).

Finally, there is an instruction in 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3:6 that says *"But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us."* What this verse is saying is that when adversity hits, you need to look and see if perhaps you need drop some old friends and find some new ones.

What does it mean to "walk disorderly"? Why are we commanded to withdraw from such people?

The last area we need to look at is...

**"Evaluation of our Priorities"** - Adversity nearly always corrects our misplaced priorities. During adversity, we are reminded of those things that are truly important to us. Things such as our relationships with family members, our friends, health, peace of mind, the ability to experience all that God has for us, eternal salvation, and our relationship with God. A classic example of misplaced priorities is that of Uzziah, king over Judah which is found in 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 26:1-23. Uzziah became a king at the age of 16. God made him prosper for as long as he sought God. As he made war against different nations and won, his fame spread throughout the land. He was helped by God until he became exceedingly strong. At this point he decided to burn incense on the altar in the temple. This was forbidden by Levitical code (Numbers 3:10; 18:7) and because of his pride, God immediately struck him with leprosy. Because of the leprosy, he was required to submit to the priests in accordance with the laws of leprosy (Leviticus Chapters 13 - 14). For the rest of his days he was required to endure isolation from his friends and from the temple. Adversity can reveal to you that there may be some priorities in your life that need to be adjusted. It is better for you to make the adjustment than to have God make it for you like he did with Uzziah. When adversity hits, ask the Lord to help you identify the priorities that need adjustment and how to re-align them so that they result in peace, prosperity, and blessing. Making this type of a change will require courage in order to pursue habits that will result in godly righteousness and healthy relationships. When adversity comes, God is leading us to examine things in our lives that may need to be changed. At the same time He is pulling us into a deeper relationship with Him. A deeper look at our lives can bring us to a deeper walk with the Lord. When adversity comes, take a look inward to see what you may need to correct in your life so that you stay on course with God. Matthew 6:31-33 is a promise from God that we can claim in this area. It says *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*

What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God? To seek righteousness? Why does the Lord command us to seek these things? Why are they not automatically revealed and provided to Christians?

Dr. Charles Stanley in his book gives us some thoughts and encouragements for today and tomorrow in each lesson. Below are the ones for us to consider with today's lesson.

Today and Tomorrow	
<b>Today:</b>	The Lord uses adversity to re-adjust the course of my life.
<b>Tomorrow:</b>	I will ask Him to show me what mid-course corrections He wants me to make.