

## **The Only Sustainable Answer** **by Fred DeRuvo – Study-Grow-Know Ministries**

In this particular economy, life can hit us very hard financially. Financial worries can be extremely frustrating, and out of all our worries, these are among the most difficult to give to God, allowing Him to work things out.

My daughter recently experienced a situation at work where because of the uncertainty of her continued employ (she was not sure if the place she was working was going to remain open), she began looking for another job. She had worked at her current job for over six years and it was the first real job she had. Of course she was nervous and unsure. She looked around and found that there were a number of positions available for which she was qualified, and so she applied. She didn't know what to expect.

The Lord was far more gracious than He needed to be, because that evening, she received a call from one of the potential employers and scheduled an interview the next day. She went to the interview and they offered her a job that evening. The Lord did not have to do that, but He did, for her sake.

Since then her husband has received some good news at his work regarding his schedule and the chance of a promotion. The Lord does work things out, but He works them out according to His plan, not ours. This is what we need to be open to, and that only occurs when, as Jude said, we pray to Him in the power of the Spirit so that the only thing that occurs in our life is His will. Praying to Him like this provides us the grace to accept His will even when His will is not what we initially envisioned.

The more we pray to Him, empowered by the Holy Spirit, the more our faith is strengthened as we see His will unfold in our life. The more our faith is strengthened due to seeing His will accomplished in our lives, the more we come to love Him *for* that will. We come to recognize it as the only sustainable answer to our situation. He knows us inside and out. He knows what we need and He knows the best way to get us someplace. He knows all things, and the more we come to terms with that, the more we grow to love Him and let go of the things in this world that attempt to control us.

This is the exact opposite of how the apostate lives his life. While the apostate wants to control *other* people for his own edification, true believers want God to control all aspects of their life.

While the apostate responds only to his earthly lusts and wants others to follow suit, the authentic Christian hears and follows only God's voice. This is the difference between the individual who truly loves God and the one who truly loves himself. On the outside, this

may be at times difficult to discern, but over time, the apostate will be seen for what he is, just as the true Christian will be seen for what he is in Christ.

I think this is best summed up in Psalm 23.

*"The LORD is my shepherd,  
 I shall not want.  
 He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
 He leads me beside quiet waters.  
 He restores my soul;  
 He guides me in the paths of righteousness  
 For His name's sake.  
 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
 I fear no evil, for You are with me;  
 Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.  
 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
 You have anointed my head with oil;  
 My cup overflows.  
 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,  
 And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."*

The Lord *is* our Shepherd, and there is no one better to have in that position. He cares for us, and because He cares for us, we will never *want* for anything we truly need.

Even though we at times are surrounded by enemies, He creates a peaceful place in the midst of life's storms so that nothing touches us unless He allows. Note that though life can be thoroughly stressful at times, like the sheep led to the peaceful streams of life-giving water, so, too, does our Great Shepherd bring us to peaceful places within so that our soul is refreshed and restored. This comes from studying His Word in order to know more about Him.

The Psalm goes on to say that everything He does in our life, He does *for His Name's sake*. He wishes to glorify Himself, and we are privileged to have Him do this *in* and *through* us. We may not understand what is happening at the time, but whether we understand it or not, we should be able to trust Him in spite of our lack of understanding.

He will guide us, and even when we feel we are surrounded by evil, He offers His protection. Is there any protection that is greater? Because of it, we have no reason to fear.

Just as the shepherd uses the rod and staff to redirect a sheep in the direction it should go, so too does our Great Shepherd direct our steps. The crook in the rod is used to gently catch the sheep around the neck, not to injure it, and not so the shepherd will *yank* the sheep, but so that the sheep will be directed in the proper path.

The shepherd also has the option of using the end of his staff to nudge the sheep one way or the other, sometimes so subtly that the sheep is hardly aware of it. In essence, then, God will direct us according to His plan and according to what is good for us.

David finishes this Psalm with high praise to God for His faithfulness and the fact that David had more than he ever thought possible. He was literally rich in spiritual blessings and so are we, though we often fail to take the time to realize it.

Jude ends this section of text by directing our attention to our greatest spiritual blessing, *eternal salvation*. There is nothing greater and nothing so undeserved. Yet God in His love and faithfulness carried His plan of redemption through to fruition so that those of us destined for hell could be legally and ultimately redirected toward heaven.

*“And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”* Jude 1:22-23

Because we have been shown tremendously undeserved mercy, we should not hesitate to show that mercy to others. At the same time, we need to be careful, because we have come to understand what we have been saved *from*, and because of it we recognize the dangers of the flesh and the sin that results from it.

Jude tells us to show mercy to some who doubt. Rather than become angry with them or desire to attack them for what we may see as faithlessness, we should approach them in gentleness, understanding the situation. Because of our humanity and our fallen nature, it is at times difficult to continue to believe. People experience doubts of all kinds where God is concerned. Even Job, as righteous as he was, experienced numerous doubts about God and his relationship with Him.

It is not unusual for people to doubt, especially in difficult times: when we lose a loved one, when things simply don't go as we think they should, or when life simply hands us lemons. It is especially normal for new Christians to doubt God, simply because they often lack the wisdom and discernment to understand.

Folks who have been Christians for years can also succumb to periods of doubt, in spite of how mightily God may have worked in their life beforehand. John the Baptist is a good example of this. He paved the way, as the Scriptures foretold he would, for Jesus. Yet when it was time for John to be taken out of this world, he wondered if Jesus really *was* the Messiah, or should they expect another? Jesus responded *not* with anger or frustration, but with love and kindness (cf. Matthew 11:4-6). There are some who make a big deal because of John's obvious doubting here, but the man was *human*. He was facing death. He had a moment of unnerving doubt. Jesus responded to those who would report back to John in

prison with these words: *“Go and report to John what you hear and see: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.”*

Jesus could have come down on John, but He understood that John’s doubts were human, and though not what Jesus wanted, His answer helped John *re-establish* faith in Jesus. Jesus responded to John in a very loving, understanding way. Because of it, He did more to help John than He would have if He had gotten angry with him, don’t you think? In essence, Jesus showed mercy on John because of John’s human frailties. Don’t forget, John was about to be executed, and that may have also created some fear or trepidation. How many of us can look death straight in the eyes, even though we know what awaits us on the other side? Death is a sobering concept.