

What To Do in Life's Difficulties

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...Bibles this morning to the book of Philippians chapter one.

I had another message to preach and then I had another message to preach and then turned right around and changed and just kept changing trying to figure out exactly what I thought maybe the Lord would want me to do today and I have been dealing with the subject of the Church. I started that last week and I have other messages to preach on the subject of the church, but I had this message pretty heavy on my heart and just perhaps felt that maybe this was what the Lord wanted me to deal with. And it is going to come out of the book of Philippians. About everything today will be in the book of Philippians and we will be looking at different things from that.

Just to give you a little bit of information about Philippians. The apostle Paul wrote this in prison. It is a prison epistle along with the book of Ephesians and the book of Colossians, the book of Philemon. All of those are were what is normally called prison epistles. He wrote these from a Roman prison. So his circumstances at this time, he wasn't in real good, what we would say, circumstances. As a matter of fact he never knew whether he was going to live or die. He didn't know. He just actually when he looked, when he wrote this epistle he didn't move... know what his future as far as this was concerned would hold.

But the key word to the book of Philippians is the word joy and rejoice. Now you wouldn't expect that. You could expect that if he wrote the book from a resort somewhere, but he wrote the book from a Roman prison. So you wouldn't expect to have a book whose key word is joy and rejoicing or chapters.

Either the word joy or rejoice is used 16 times in this small book.

So what I think it does, I think the book of Philippians is a very key book. And I think the information in it is key to being able to deal with difficult situations. And that is what I am going to entitle this message this morning, "What to do in Life's Difficulties," because their key to that, many of the keys to that is in the book of Philippians.

So you write that down, "What to do in Life's Difficulties."

Now these things that I am going to give you is all I am going to give them to you out of Philippians, but I also want to tell you that these things I am giving you are battle tested.

You say, "What in the world do you mean by that?"

I have experienced all of these things. These are things that has carried me for years in difficult situations. I have faced a lot of difficult situations and so have you. So these things are things that he Lord has used in my life and I am sure they are things that the Lord can use in your life. Ok?

So what I am going to do today is give you some dos in this text. Do you remember the message is entitled "What to do in Life's Difficulties," I am going to give you six dos, six things that you can do. Does that sound good?

You say, "Well, pastor, I am not in a difficulty now."

Well, you will be one of these days. And this will be a blessing to you in the future and all of this will come out of the book of Philippians. So you write these down.

I am not sure how this is going to go. I am just going to trust the Lord to help me with it and I am more comfortable with doing a text, as you know. I like to do a text and work the text. It is right there in front of you the whole time, but this is going to be more ... going to be moving around a good bit. So you pray that the Lord would help me today in this.

Philippians chapter one is our first do. What to do life's difficulties, number one do focus on positives, not negatives. Number one, do focus on positives, and not negatives.

I am going to tell you something right now, folks. When a difficulty comes, negative thinking really will pull you down. Negative thinking really will pull you down.

I must tell you that when difficulties come into your life, it really indeed is, as really it is every day of your life, it really is a battle for your mind. The first thing you have to do is get your mind under control. That is the first thing that has to be done. And if you don't get you mind under control, then the negative thinking will take over and it will suck you dry spiritually and it will such all your strength. It will make you lose strength to be able to handle it and respond to it like you should.

All God's people said...

So negative thinking will really pull you down. Now negative thinking will show itself. Negative thinking will show itself. It will show itself two ways. It will show itself in your tongue. It will show itself in your tongue and it will also show itself in your countenance. You can tell when someone is thinking negative is it pulls your countenance down. You will look at their face and I can see it in people. Are you with me? I can see it

in myself. You will be able to see it in your countenance and your tongue will reveal it. Your tongue will always reveal negative thinking. [?] It will just come right out of you, ok?

So that is what the first thing I wanted to give you this morning is focus on positives, not negatives.

Now let me give you the illustration of that here in Philippians chapter one. You want to see it? Philippians chapter one. I want you to notice verse 12. Here is Paul writing from a Roman prison cell. He is in chains, brother Coy. He has bonds on him. He hasn't been doing anything, Denver, but things that are good. As a matter of fact, he was serving the Lord when he was arrested. As a matter of fact, he was arrested for serving the Lord. So he wasn't in jail for doing anything wrong. As a matter of fact, him being there was unfair. He wasn't treated right. And he was put in prison in spite of all of the things that he did that was good. He was just trying to serve the Lord. He never had near this much trouble when he was a Pharisee. Now that he began to know the Messiah and serve the Messiah Jesus in a right way, boy, oh, boy did the difficulties run into this man of God's life. And this book is a key to how to handle it.

I want you to notice how he focused on positive, not negatives in this text. It says, verse 12:

“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.”¹

He said, “I have been in prison, but I want you to understand. You there at Philippi, “ he knew they were worried about him. “I want you to understand that what happened to me hasn't hindered the gospel, it rather has furthered the gospel.”

You see, he is looking at the positive. He is not looking at the negative. That is what I want you to see. Let's read on.

He goes on to say, “My bonds,” that is these chains. He said, “[My chains] in Christ are manifest in all the palace,”² all of the place there, Caesar's household. The people there in Rome all heard about the bonds this man named Paul and this Christ that he served. This man is there and in bonds because of the cause of Christ. And it opened up the door for him to share the gospel with, I believe, even Caesar himself. It opened the door to all the palace guard there to hear the gospel. So he is wanting them to know that it didn't hinder it. It advanced the gospel.

Verse 14 says:

“And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds.”³

¹ Philippians 1:12.

² Philippians 1:13.

³ Philippians 1:14.

I mean, people that before who weren't as bold to stand out and speak for Christ when they looked at the example of this man of God making a stand and being true no matter being thrown in jail and continuing to serve God even in bonds, they waxed confident to come up and preach, too, stand along with him.

Paul is looking at the what, again? He is looking at the positives of his circumstance. He is looking at the positives of this situation. Does everybody see it?

And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached.⁴

All God's people said...

Well, he looked at this situation and in this situation, you know, I thought if that would have been me imprisoned in Rome and I was writing a letter to Elizabeth Baptist Church I thought, oh, my, I am in such horrible shape. I don't why God allowed me to get thrown in this Roman prison. I mean, after all, all I was trying to do was serve the Lord. It stinks in here. The guards are hateful. The prisoners beside me smell. I would give every... and you got my... and you all would have got my letter and you would be going, "Poor pastor Jeff."

But that is not what he did. I mean, would you agree with me that there was plenty of negatives that you could have picked? If you would have been in chains, can you imagine your chains felt good? Have you ever tried to sleep in chains? Do you think he had a soft bed to sleep on? You think the prison cell was hot? Do you think it was air conditioned?

I mean, he had so many things he could have complained about is what I want you to see. There was a lot of negatives there he could have focused his mind on. But what I want you to see, he didn't focus on the negatives. He focused on the positive. And that was best for him, too.

Not only is it a great testimony to other people, but that was best for him, too.

You need to try to focus more on the positives in your difficulties as opposed to focusing on the negatives. And do you know what that will benefit? First of all, Mike, it will benefit you. It will raise you up. It will change your thinking. You will bring more glory to God that way. You will be more effective in his work that way.

⁴ Philippians 1:14-18.

Number one, today, I have got to move. I know you have got a lot of time. So number one in dealing with life's difficulties, what is the first thing you do? What is the first thing you do? You get control of your mind. And you get control of your mind, number one by focusing on the positives, not negatives. That will get your mind under control. That is the first thing that goes.

Have you ever heard that the first thing that goes is your mind? That is not necessarily the first thing that goes, by the way, but that is the ... but have you ever heard that before? So other first thing you have got to get control of is your mind. If you don't get control of your mind then that negative thinking will eat you alive and your countenance will reflect it and your talk will reflect it.

You say, "Well, there is no... there is no positives."

Are there not? If you are saved there is plenty of positives if you will just count them, all kinds of positives if you will really get to looking there is all kind... Hey, if you will really get to counting, there is all kinds of positives, brother Coy, all kinds of them. You have just got to look at them and focus on them.

You have got the first one? You have got the first one? Focus your mind on the positives, not the negatives.

Did you see the example what Paul did in the text? That is what he was doing, wasn't it? Imagine if you were writing, what you would have said. If you was in his circumstances, what you would have said. And look at what he did. He focused his mind on the positive.

Do you think that would have been uplifting for this church? Oh, that would have fired them up. Man, look here. He can stand if God can give him the strength to stand in his situation, we can stand in ours here in Philippi together.

It would have been encouraging to him, number two, number two.

Number two, do view... the first do was do focus on positives, not negatives. The second one is do view all situations as coming from God. That might sound offensive to you, but let me explain it.

Do view all situations as coming from God.

I always liked to define that as putting all things under God's sovereignty. I like to call that putting all things under God's sovereignty.

Notice what he writes. Look over in Philippians chapter four and we are going to glean it. Now I am not going to look real deep at that. Of course, you can't in the book of Philippians.

Do view all situations as coming from God.

Philippians four, verse 11.

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am.”⁵

What does it mean whatever state? That is whatever circumstance he was in.

Now he said he learned this. You don't do this automatic. You learn it. God has to work this in you.

He said:

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am...”⁶

Whatever the condition, whatever the circumstance. Let me say it one more time. Whatever the condition, whatever the circumstance, he said:

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be...”⁷

What? Content.

Of course, you look down in the text it says you can do all things through Christ which strengthens him. That is how he was able to do that.

Now could you if you was chained and you was in a Roman prison and you didn't know whether you could live or die, would you be content with that situation? The word content means satisfied. But what he ... how the apostle Paul viewed this thing is he felt God brought him into this circumstance. He felt that the place that he was at was because God brought him to it, that this wasn't something that happened by accident, that this was something that God had control over and seen to it that he put him there for a purpose.

He viewed his circumstances coming from God and that is the reason why he was content with his circumstance.

I like to say, “God, you take my circumstance, that would be different.”

Well, God wants you to be content in is where you are at right now. God wants you to be satisfied with him and have strength where you are at right now.

God, if you change this, I will be happy. God, if you change this, I will be more faithful.

God wants you to be happy where you are at and in the circumstance you are in. You waste your life if you don't do that. You are going to have difficult circumstances. God's

⁵ Philippians 4:11.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

people is not promised they won't either in this world. As a matter of fact, the master tells us.

“In the world ye shall have tribulation.”⁸

But God, the great, sweet King is going to take those hard circumstances and put a good purpose and twist on them and work good out of it. That's what he is going to do.

He said he was content whatever circumstance the Lord led him into whether he was preaching on Mars' Hill or whatever, or whether he was in a Roman prison. This is where God wants me. This is the place where God has led me. I am content to be here, master with your what? With your strength. And he was.

I think it is awesome.

Let me show you something.

Turn to the book of Job chapter one.

You have got the second do. Do view all situations as coming from God. That will help you be able to handle it. That will help you.

If you view things that is coming from a loving, heavenly Father, that will help you be able to stand it because you know he has got a purpose of it. That will make sense out of the senseless. This is the hand of God and he has a good purpose for that. He makes sense out of the senseless. He makes you be able to handle. You can't handle if you view it coming from the devil. The devil is not stronger than your God.

Oh, the devil did this. The devil did that. The devil did this.

God... the devil is not stronger than our great King, is he not?

I want to show you something in the book of Job chapter one.

You all remember this. Did the devil want to afflict Job? Does anybody know? Yeah. He wanted to afflict Job. And he was going to and fro in the earth like he is pictured in the book of 1 Peter, as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. And there was a day that he come before the Lord.

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?”⁹

⁸ John 16:33.

⁹ Job 1:8.

Had the devil considered it? Oh, yeah. Yeah, he knew Job. I want to tell you tonight. I want to tell you this morning. The devil knows God's people. He does.

Well, Satan had a desire to afflict Job. But I want you to notice today that he could not afflict Job without God's permission. I don't know why people miss that. It is there.

Watch this now, Job one verse nine.

“Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him.”¹⁰

And he said, “You put a fence around Job. You put a fence about him.” And he said, “I can't touch him.”

Isn't that cool? I mean, Satan is a lion, but he is a lion on a leash and the end of the leash is our God. You have got to remember that.

Oh, my, let me move on.

Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.¹¹

He accused Job of being a fair weather Christian. As long as everything was peachy and good, there really [?] richest man in the east. No wonder you serve him, he has got the nicest house in the land. No wonder you serve him, look at all the children you give him. No wonder you serve him, he is a great man. That is what he said.

And he said:

“But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.”¹²

Now watch this.

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.”¹³

What I want you to see is he, the devil, could not afflict Job unless permitted to by the Father. I want you to see that. He just didn't come in and just start afflicting Job and God is helpless to do anything about it. He had to have God's permission to afflict Job.

¹⁰ Job 1:9-10.

¹¹ Job 1:10-11.

¹² Job 1:11.

¹³ Job 1:12.

Everybody in the house see that? He had to have his permission. In other words, he couldn't touch Job unless permitted by the Father. That is what I want you to see.

Well, that didn't work. That didn't work at all on this man of God. He responded remarkably. Notice what it says in verse 21.

I want you to notice how Job took it. I want you to see if he viewed it as the devil attacking him. How did Job view it? Watch this now.

Verse 10.

“Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?”¹⁴

Now look over at verse 21.

Verse 20. I am sorry.

“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped.”¹⁵

Now I don't know if I would have responded that way. He lost all these riches, seven sons and three daughters on the same day, all these sheep, all these oxen, everything in one day.

He still had his health until the second chapter and that is when he got that skin disease that made him almost beyond recognition. But what I want you to notice what this man of God says. I want everybody in the house to look at this.

Verse 21.

“And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither.”¹⁶

Watch it now. What does the man of God say?

“The LORD gave.”¹⁷

Now what else does he say?

“...and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Job 1:10.

¹⁵ Job 1:20.

¹⁶ Job 1:21.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Did he attribute the devil to doing all that?

You say, "Well, the devil did."

Well, he didn't do it without permission. God used him. He had a purpose for it, too.

I am going to tell you something today. If you view your situation as coming from a loving heavenly Father, it helps you be able to handle it. It makes sense out of the senseless when you realize, my friend, that the Lord has a divine purpose for it then. It comes from the Father.

Everybody, if it comes from the Father, then it has a what?

If you don't view it that way, you will get so bitter and aggravated and mean and it will so absorb your mind that you won't never serve the Lord the rest of your days hardly.

One of the greatest destroyers of Christian fruitfulness is bitterness. People bitter at the hand of God and God is good. He can't do evil and he has a purpose for everything.

You have got the first two. I have got to move, sorry.

Number one, do focus on... what we are talking the message is on what to do in life's difficulties. Number one, you do focus on positives, not negatives.

Number two, you do view all situations as coming from who? So if they come from God, Sean, then it has a what? It has a purpose. Do we know that? You have got to live it, though. You have got to get it out of your mouth and your heart. And the Lord can help you do that.

Number three... Number three, do praise God even though you don't feel like it.

Let's turn to the book of Philippians back to our text. I am giving you dos. Do praise God even if you don't feel like. Sometimes I don't feel like praising him, Sean. I don't feel like it. My body don't feel like it. My mind don't feel like it. Does your mind always feel like praising, Mike? Sometimes you don't feel like praising. You praise him anyhow. Praise him even when you don't feel like it. You don't always feel like it. You are going through a difficulty sometimes you don't feel like praising if you are human. Now if you are above human you might want to talk to me after services. Yeah.

You do praise even though you don't... that is the third thing you do. You do praise even though you don't feel like it.

Well, is there always reason to praise him? Notice what it says here in Philippians 4:4. Keep in mind who is writing and where he is writing from.

“Rejoice in the Lord...”¹⁹

What does it say?

“Rejoice in the Lord always.”²⁰

Now it didn't say to rejoice in the Lord sometimes. It didn't.... it also didn't say just rejoice in the Lord when things are peachy, did it? Because things aren't always going to be peachy for you.

It says to rejoice in the Lord always. That is something you choose to do, isn't it? You have got to choose to rejoice in the Lord.

One of the things I notice and I mentioned this again because it has made such a difference in my life. One of the things that I noticed, we are preaching through the book of 1 Peter on Sunday evenings and I have got that message online if you would like to listen to it. I give four reasons to praise God out of 1 Peter 1:3-5. Remember that?

Peter in 1 Peter he was writing to people that was going through heaviness because of great trial. And the first thing he does is he gives them reasons to praise the Lord. And he talks about in 1 Peter chapter one and verse three, he praises God for his mercy. In his mercy he hath begotten us again, he says.

You know, I don't care where you are at, but you can always praise God for his mercy. If it wasn't for God's mercy I would still be a sinner. If it wasn't for his mercy I would still be in my sin. If it wasn't for his mercy I would still be under condemnation.

Buddy, when I start thinking about his mercy and where I could be at if it wasn't for him, he makes me want to praise him.

Lord, thank you for your mercy.

Let me ask you again if you thank God for his mercy. I am old Mephibosheth that the King sent for and made him as one of the king's sons. I will sit at his table continually. That is mercy.

I thank God every day for his mercy now. Lord, thank you for mercy. I mean it.

Mercy is getting that which you do not deserve. If I got what I deserved the earth would open up and I would slide right into hell, but he bestowed upon me his mercy. And in his mercy he begot me again. I have a new birth. Sean, is that something to praise God for? That is the second thing he does in 1 Peter chapter one verse three and four.

¹⁹ Philippians 4:4.

²⁰ Ibid.

Then he praises God for his inheritance. Do you got an inheritance? Now you might have a worldly inheritance, but you are just borrowing that. That ain't going with you. Only but a heavenly inheritance does. I got a great inheritance, don't you? Is that something for?

And do you know what? On top of that, not only do you have an inheritance, his mercy and you have the new birth and you have that inheritance, but he says he keeps you till you get it. You are kept by the power of God. Does that make you praise him when you thank him for those four things? Those are reasons to praise him. So do praise him. Do praise him.

I have read this to you in the past. I will read it to you again> Listen to it. You don't have to turn there. I will tell you where it is at.

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom...”²¹

Now this is the book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk was a prophet and he was wondering in chapter one when God was going to bring judgment on Judah for all their sin. It was such a wicked land. And then God reveals that he is going to bring the Babylonians down and they were going not destroy the temple and destroy the temple and defecate the land. And then that tore him up. And realized of all people the Babylonians are more wicked than we are.

Well, he realizes all this judgment is coming. I want you to listen to him praise God here. Are you ready?

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.”²²

That is all bad news there, isn't it?

“Yet...”

Everybody say, “Yet.”

Yet. He is making a decision to praise. He probably didn't feel like it out of all the bad news he just got.

Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.²³

²¹ Habakkuk 3:17.

²² Ibid.

²³ Habakkuk 3:18-19.

Habakkuk praised. Paul praised.

Acts 16. You know the story of the Philippian jailer. What did he do at midnight after being beaten and stripped and mocked and for doing good? What did he do at midnight? At midnight he prayed and sang praises. Why did he do that? The Lord gave him grace to do it, an extra dose of strength. But there was still reasons he had to praise.

Se, that goes back to the negative thinking. There is reasons to praise when you say.

You got the first three?

Do focus on the positives, not the negatives.

O view all situations as coming from God. Do praise him even though you don't feel like it.

Number four, turn back to the book of Philippians. I just got two more.

Hey, folks, this might be helping somebody. Just give me a little bit of time. I don't want to rush with it.

And if it don't help you today, it could help you tomorrow.

Philippians chapter one. See all of these dos come out of Philippians.

Listen to what he says in Philippians one and verse 21. Again, he is writing to the church at Philippi. Notice what he says.

“For to me to live is...”²⁴

What?

I like that.

“For to me to live is Christ.”²⁵

Not to live is your job or not to live is this or that or the other. For me to live is... for me to live. for me to live is my family. Is that a good one to live for? I mean, if your family is the only reason why you live, if you lose any family, you will lose your reason to live. For you to live is Christ is your reason. He is the reason.

Is that what it says? His purpose behind his life was Christ, not his job, not anything but Christ was why he was living.

²⁴ Philippians 1:21.

²⁵ Ibid.

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”²⁶

So he was in a Roman prison and let me ask you a question. Was he still serving Jesus there? here is the fourth do. Do serve God where you are at. Do serve God where you are at.

The Lord saved my circumstances. The Lord changed my situation then I serve him.

God wants you to serve him where you are.

Now he can do what he did before. I mean, he couldn't travel all over the place, you know, like he went on Mars' Hill and preached and he couldn't go into Corinth and preach and he couldn't go into these different areas and preach like he did before, but he served God where he was at. And he did what he could do for the master here he was at. You have got to serve him where you are at, because he put you where you are at.

You have go to serve him, folks, where you are at, now. You best do that because that is where the blessings lie and that is where the strength lies.

You have got to witness where you are. You have got to pray where you are at. Look what all this man of God did. Have you ever heard of the prison epistles? You all heard of them. What are they? Philippians, Ephesians. You all like the book of Ephesians? How about the book of Colossians, the book of Philemon? Prison epistles. He wrote those from prison. See the point?

He couldn't do the same thing he did before, but he could write. He couldn't do the same thing he could do before, but he could pray. And he could serve. He could witness, Mike. He couldn't be out everywhere, but he could witness there in the jail cell. And, you know, the Lord saved people while he was there.

Have you ever heard of Onesimus? He as begotten in his bonds. He was from the city, if I remember right, of Colosse. The book of Philemon was a letter that Onesimus brought to his master. He was an escaped slave that escaped and went to Rome and was begotten there, born again there through the preaching of Paul. He served God where he was at. He never ceased to serve him. He just changed what he did and how he did it. He still preached and all. He couldn't... wasn't... couldn't get out the way that he could before because he as chained, but he served is my point. You serve God where you are at.

I told you this before in the past. I will tell it to you again.

It was a pastor's wife and she got to where she was paralyzed from the neck down so she couldn't... I couldn't imagine that, could you? It is just to think about it shudders me. So she couldn't walk and she couldn't get out and she ... and she was... can you imagine the

²⁶ Ibid.

pastor? The pastor's wife does a lot and so she couldn't really get out and do things like most pastor's wives can. You know, she couldn't.

And it says that what she did is she kept serving the Lord. She had people bring prayer requests and just pin them right there where she was in the bed. She had those prayer requests pinned all around her where she could see them so that she could pray over them. That is what she did for the rest of her days. She became a prayer warrior and she prayed constantly. She kept serving. She served God where she was at. She did what she could do.

Some said she probably... more was accomplished through that than any other means. She prayed.

Number five. Philippians chapter three now, verse 14.

I don't think I am stretching this and I try not to stretch, but I want you to get this.

Verse 13.

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before...”²⁷

The fifth do in life's distresses is to live in the present. Do live in the present, not in the past.

I have got some statements to make about that. You will never be happy in the present if you live in the past. You will never be happy in the present if you will live in the past.

Let me say something else. You will waste your present if you live in the past.

I will give you a text to go with that, but I won't turn to it because of the time. The book of Ezra chapter three and verses 11 through 13.

After a 70 year captivity the Bible prophesied that the children of Israel would be sent back to their land. That time came. King Cyrus sends them back to rebuild, first of all, the temple. And they come back and they build the temple and they lay the foundation of that temple, ok, and when it began to go up it says that the people rejoiced. And would there be reason for rejoicing you think? I mean this was a miracle. This was a prophecy. It was a prophecy, but it is now they seen it come to pass and here these Jews that had been gone for 70 years had been sent back by God's grace and they are rebuilding the place of worship again. God's house is going up. Reason to praise, are they not?

But it says that the old men who saw the former temple from the old days, it says they lifted up their voice and they wept so that the people couldn't discern the voice of weeping from the voice of rejoicing.

²⁷ Philippians 3:13.

I read that I thought how sad that is. There was such a great reason there to praise God, but they lost it because they were living in the past.

The apostle Paul said this one thing he do. He forgot those things which are behind and he reached forth unto the things which were before.

If you are not careful and this is to the older folks and I am one of them now, I guess. I catch myself living in the past. Do you? I catch myself living in the past, past people, past blessings, all these different past things and it sucks me dry to where I don't want to go on no more.

You can't live in the past. You have got to live in the present, future.

Paul said for me to live is what again? Christ. And he said, "I forgot the things which are past and I reach forward to the things which are before."

You remember the past. Don't get me wrong, but you don't live there. You see the difference between remembering the past and living there? You live there and they eat you up. They eat your lunch. You will miss the present blessings. I am telling you. You will miss the present blessings and it will suck you right out of serving the Lord and suck away all your joy. I never seen anybody happy that lived in the past. I feel sorry for people that does that. I do it. I have been here 30 years. Thirty years is a long time. I seen a lot. I have experienced a lot.

And you will catch yourself. Well, I wish it was back in this day. I wish it was... [?] It ain't.

And what could I do? You quit. And not get around anymore. Or you could be thankful of the past and move on in the present.

All God's people said...

Do not live in the past. You will catch yourself doing it. If you ever catch yourself doing it, do you ever catch yourself doing it? Do you ever catch yourself... well, I wish my kids were five again. Do you ever do it? I wish I could go back and do this again. Are you happy when you are doing that? No, you are not. You won't be.

See, this is a battle of the mind. Again, it comes down to the mind. You have got to get that thing under control or it will eat your lunch. It will. It will cause you to lose... it will cause you to waste your present.

Number six, this is the last one. Now I will read all of them again at the end and give them to you and then we are going to have a good healthy prayer this morning when we leave. Philippians four and verse 13 says, this is the sixth do. Do draw strength from God.

Notice what it says in Philippians four and verse 13:

“I can do...”²⁸ What?

It don't say some things. I can do. It doesn't say I can't do. There is a lot of things I can't do. But:

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”²⁹

Have you ever experienced the strengthening from Christ? Would you raise your right hand this morning? If you have experienced his strength it is amazing his strength, what he can do. Christ will strengthen his people.

You know, he had the throne of grace that he invites you to come to for grace any time you need it and strength any time you need it. He said in Hebrews four to come boldly to his throne of that you may obtain grace and find strength to help in time of need.

We need to avail ourself of that. Do draw strength from your God.

Do you know where you get strength at? Where you get strength it [?].

When you pray does God hit you with a lightning bolt and, boom, you got strength? He uses different means of giving you strength, different ways.

Have you ever been strengthened by coming to God's house? Man that message will come to you was just exactly what you needed to hear. Or maybe that song that was song was just exactly what just exactly what you needed. And the company of the saints being there, people that loved you, just made you and kind of lifted you up. He will give you strength at the house of God.

Asaph in the book of Psalms 73 was just overwhelmed with his circumstance. He is questioning God. He was complaining and quarreling and saying life is unfair and God is unfair and all of these things until he went to the house of God. Then he understood.

You need God's help. God will strengthen you at his house. You don't gets strength by staying away from God's house. I get weaker when is stay away from God's house. It makes you weak. You need to company with the saints. You need the message from the pulpit. You need the ... you need the encouragement that you can get at God's house.

See, you draw strength from coming to his house. You also draw strength from his Word.

²⁸ Philippians 4:13.

²⁹ Ibid.

Ah, man, I love this book, my most prized possession. God has lifted me up with this thing so many times. If you stay away from this book you are running from your power source and your stress source. You can't get people to read God's Word today. It is sad.

I done a message it is going to play, where at? On the radio tomorrow. And in Romans three it talks about, "What advantage then hath the Jew?"³⁰

You know what their main advantage was? The oracles. God gave to the Jews the Scriptures. They were benefited because they had the Scriptures. That is a great benefit, is it not?

I also studied through the book of Deuteronomy, if I remember right, if I can remember fight from the time and past that I went. If they copied the law out, a copy of the law out and gave it to the king. Do you all remember when I mentioned that to you? And what I am trying to say is they copied a copy of the law. Only the king had his own personal copy other than the one at the temple.

What I am trying to say is that the average Jew never carried around a copy of the law with him. They were considered advantaged because God gave the Scriptures through them. But, folks, I want to tell you today. Are we advantaged? We have got Old and New Testaments. We have got our own personal copies. We don't use it and don't need it, don't spend no time in it at all. And I am telling you this is a source of strength.

Paul said:

"I can do all things through Christ."³¹

Do draw strength from God. You do that through prayer. You do that by coming to his house. You do that by reading his Word. You also do it with fellowship with God's people. You need God's people. You need other saints that will encourage you in the things and encourage you.

There is encouraging saints and there is discouraging saints, though. You don't want to talk with a discouraging saint. You want to talk to someone who is going to help you and encourage you in the things of God. You need those four things. God will give you strength those ways.

You run away from this house and you run away from fellowship with his people, you stay way from his Word and you don't talk to him, you won't get strong. You have to do these things to be strong.

All right. I am going to wrap this up. Don't tune me out yet. All right, when I close is when I lose everybody. I want to keep it where it is at.

³⁰ Romans 3:1.

³¹ Philippians 4:13.

I give you what to do in life's difficulties from Philippians. All of it came from Philippians, a book that was written in great difficulty and that is why I went to it to find what to do.

Number one, you do focus on positives, not negatives. I gave you the example.

You do view all situations as coming from God. You do that. You put that under his sovereignty. And that helps you realize that there is a purpose for it. That helps you be able to carry on.

You do praise him even when you don't feel like it because praise lifts you up and gets your focus up where it needs to be.

You do serve him where you are at. If I get to where I can't preach, I will serve him by praying or I will serve him by writing sermons for a young preacher, if I have to. But I will serve him some way. But I intend by his grace to serve him till I die. It might change the way I serve, but I want to serve him.

“For me to live is...”³²

Number five, do live in the present, not in the past. If you do that, you will catch yourself doing that. You watch what it does.

And, number six, do draw strength from God.

All God's people said...

Let's all stand. I hope this helps you. I hope you do the six dos, six dos there in the text.

Now I changed this message today. I had another one I spent a whole lot more time on, so I am sure my delivery was rough this morning so you will excuse that. The Lord is able to take a rough delivered sermon and use it. And I pray that he does.

Perhaps this message was for you. And if it is not for you today, it will be for you some time. These are six dos that will really help you in times of difficulty.

³² Philippians 1:21.