

You may want to turn to 2 Timothy 2 this morning as a place holder. We will be spending some time there today. Also, Matthew 14.

Introduction:

As we look toward the coming new year...God asks us all the same simple question, **“Will you trust Me?”** Through the Word and prophetic insight, we may have some idea of what lies ahead of us next year, however we now see through a glass darkly (1 Corinthians 13:12 KJV) and into every life some rain must fall — both on the just and the unjust. Jesus taught at the sermon on the mount:

“But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!” In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.” Matthew 5:44-45 NLT

1. Testing, trials, suffering, and persecution.

You don't hear much about that, especially as a new Believer, but if we are ever going to find out whether God is Trustworthy or not, we must go through adversity, hard times, and suffering. Should we expect it? When Jesus told His disciples to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him, does that sound like a sunny day or a particularly pleasant experience? NOT so much! The Apostle Paul put it this way to the Colossians:

“I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church.” Colossians 1:24 NLT

So why are we so “shocked” when bad things happen to “good people,” like you or me for instance? Did God promise to remove everything bad from our lives, immediately calm every storm, or eliminate all our troubles, when we receive Jesus as Savior and Lord? Paul told his spiritual son Timothy, *“to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”* (2 Timothy 2:3). It does not sound like a life that's all roses. What we find promised in the Word is *“ALL things work together for good...”* (Romans 8:28), not that everything we encounter in life is going to be good. I'd encourage you to read through the Book of Job again (but be sure to read all the way to the end of the Book).

Paul goes on to say from prison in 2 Timothy 2:

“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore, I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” 2 Timothy 2:8-10 NKJV

Expect adversity. Satan, our adversary, goes around like a roaring lion... If you're experiencing opposition, trials, or trouble, take comfort in knowing that God is not finished building Christ's character in you or you are threatening the kingdom of darkness and Satan is not taking that lightly.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Peter 5:8 NKJV.

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” John 10:10 NKJV

Abundant life isn't necessarily always painless. What has Satan stolen from you? A reminder from Pastor Tim: “The rest of the year, it's take back territory time.”

2. “Is God faithful?”

Going back to 2 Timothy 2, we all must come to grips with the question, “Is God faithful?” “Can I really trust Him?”

“Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach. And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained. So, I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen. This is a trustworthy saying: If we die with him, we will also live with him. If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.” 2 Timothy 2:8-13 NLT

This scripture gets to the real heart of the matter, is God going to remain faithful regardless of what we are experiencing? It's really good news that God's faithfulness does not depend on our faithfulness. Just like His love for us does not depend on what we do or don't do. We can't get God to love us any more or less than He already does. You see, what we are dealing with here is God's character, that's independent of us. Our God is love, Perfect Love. He is altogether holy and just. Righteousness and justice are the foundations of His throne. When we confess our sin, He is faithful to forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9), and then He chooses to forget our sin (Hebrews 10:16-18, Psalms 103:11-13). Amazing, but that's who He is!!!

Trust example: Jesus & Peter walking on the water. (Matthew 14:24-33.)

- a. Jesus had stayed back praying. Disciples left in a boat headed across the lake and were in trouble — far out from shore and fighting heavy waves.
- b. Jesus comes to them in the early morning hours, walking on the water. The disciples freak out. The Word says they are terrified, thinking they had seen a ghost.
- c. *“But Jesus spoke to them at once. “Don't be afraid,” he said. “Take courage. I am here!””* (v. 27)
- d. Peter has this great idea and calls to Jesus, “Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water.” Jesus responds, “Come.” So, what was Peter thinking? This wasn't safe, the storm was still raging. We know that Peter could swim. After all, he was a fisherman. We know he could at least swim 100 yards since he swam to shore to see Jesus after the disciples had gone fishing post resurrection and weren't catching anything (Jesus told them to cast the net on the other side in John 21). Peter goes overboard and begins walking on the water to Jesus. Then what happens? Fear

sets in. Peter starts trusting what he senses (seeing the storm), taking his eyes off Jesus and no longer trusting Jesus's word.

- e. *"But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?""* (v. 30-31)
- f. I don't see this as Jesus reprimanding Peter. When the two get back to the boat, the Scripture does not say that Peter immediately went off to mope. Instead, they all worshipped. *"When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed."* (v. 32-33). They all got their eyes back on Jesus!

3. We have confidence: ***"which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."*** (Colossians 1:27)

When we repent of our sin and accept God's gracious offer of forgiveness based on faith in what Jesus did for us by dying in our place on the cross, we become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Old things pass away, behold all things become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Word tells us that we become Temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19). Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children (Romans 8:16). The same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in us (Romans 8:11). Whatever comes for the rest of 2019 or in 2020, we walk in abundant life, choosing joy no matter the adversity, for in Christ we have the victory. We agree with God's promise, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4).

Conclusion:

James tells us the testing of our faith produces endurance, which when fully developed results in our being perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So, let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing."

God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." James 1:2-4, 12 NLT

We can spend 2020 avoiding trouble, or stressed out and in fear, or we can learn to trust Him in the middle of the inevitable testing to see our enduring faith develop as Holy Spirit works in us to bring about the likeness of Christ.

Invitation to trust Him.

Will you join me in making this declaration from God's Word?

"This I declare about the Lord: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him." Psalms 91:2 NLT