

## Facing Life's Challenges - Part 1

It's a simple fact. No one of an accountable age and reasonable mind is exempt from life's challenges. These challenges present themselves to us in a myriad of forms. Health difficulties, financial adversity, marital crises and more come at us on a frequent basis. At times it may seem that life's challenges all attack us at once and in machine gun fashion. With the weight of the world seemingly on our shoulders, we wonder if we have the strength to go on and, in more desperate times, perhaps even wonder if God has abandoned us. How does one deal with these difficulties when they arise?

Let's begin by stating the obvious. The ONLY way by which one can deal with the trials of life is by being a faithful Christian. In fact, faithfulness to God has always been the first and foremost way to tackle life's challenges. In the Old Testament, in Psalm 73 we read of how Asaph looked around at the evil in the world and nearly came to the conclusion that he was wasting his time trying to live a Godly life. In verse 13 he recalled how at one time in his life he declared, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." Apparently the basis of his struggle was opposition to his faithfulness to God. As is still the case today, the world has little tolerance for righteousness and aggressively persecutes those who live for the Lord. As long as Asaph had his eyes on the world and away from God, he felt overwhelmed. Verse 17 shows what turned him around. "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." When he turned his focus upward rather than outward, he realized that the only future for a life of wickedness was destruction whereas the future as well as the present of a faithful child of God is secure. As Asaph wrote in verses 23-26: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

When many of those who had been following Jesus turned back and ceased to follow Him, He asked His apostles, "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:67). Peter's reply should be our watchword when it comes to dealing with life's challenges. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:68).

When we face trouble we don't want to bear that burden alone. We want to turn to one who cares about our pain and internal strife. When Paul wrote that God is faithful (I Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; I Thessalonians 5:24) he meant that God is reliable. Because of this, we can rest assured that I Peter 5:7 is the rock solid truth. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." No one cares for us like the Lord. Many friends and dear loved ones can provide a welcome listening ear but the primary source of comfort in the face of trials is our God. No matter how intensely the trials of life may trouble our souls, their pressures can never surpass the love and compassion of God for us. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (I John 4:4).

Step number one then in facing and overcoming life's challenges is to seek God first (Matthew 6:33). He has given His perfect Word to guide us (Psalm 119:105) and to comfort us (I Thessalonians 4:18) and He readily hears the prayers of the faithful (Psalm 34:15). With such powerful tools at our disposal we can face our trials and truly be "more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Romans 8:37).

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