

## **Facing Life's Challenges - Part 4**

### **Fellowship: Another Weapon of Victory Against Life's Challenges**

"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Although we must put our trust in God ahead of our trust in man (Psalm 146:3-5), the fact is that God has made us social beings. We crave human companionship. The church provides this companionship at a higher level than what friendships in the world offer as Christian fellowship allows us to share the joys of life with those who understand that God is the source of our blessings. As it pertains to facing life's challenges, Christian fellowship keeps our focus on God as the source of our relief.

There are many "one another" passages in the New Testament, each of which is a reminder that God has given us the blessing of Christian fellowship in order to help us in our journey through this life. As Christians, we are to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), comfort one another (I Thessalonians 4:18), edify one another (I Thessalonians 5:11) and pray for one another (James 5:16). The strength and encouragement from fellow soldiers of the cross of Christ is readily available. One can only wonder why any Christian would either neglect or completely avoid any opportunity to avail himself or herself of the blessing of fellowship with other children of God.

As we read the inspired epistles of Paul, we see the apostle to the Gentiles as a tower of strength and a bastion of faith. However, we also see a man who greatly desired and deeply needed the fellowship of other Christians. We know that he often suffered for the faith (II Corinthians 4:8-5:2; 6:4-10; 11:23-28) and as one who himself felt the strain of hardships, he just as often appealed to the brethren for help. He asked for their prayers in the face of danger (Romans 15:30-31; II Thessalonians 3:1-2). He asked for their fellowship when he was lonely (II Timothy 4:9-21). He made specific plans to go and visit congregations because he wanted to be with them (Romans 15:23ff; I Thessalonians 2:17) and longed for them when they were apart (Philippians 1:8). Paul suffered as we do and in many ways even more so, and in his quest for comfort during life's difficulties he often turned to the fellowship of the saints.

In concluding this series on facing life's challenges, let me ask you to consider the following situation. Suppose a man is drowning. Having seen his predicament, rescuers come to his aid. A boater rushes to his side with ropes and lifesavers, a diver jumps into the water, prepared to pull him up as he goes under and even a helicopter hovers overhead to whisk him away to the emergency room. The man is in peril but within ready reach he has everything he needs to be delivered from danger. Can you see in your mind's eye that man who, though struggling to live, has deliverance from his anguish all around him? If you can see this, can you not also see yourself through the eye of faith struggling with the trials of life, nearly drowning in them and yet looking up and seeing the promises of God in His Word, the power of prayer and the comfort of Christian fellowship as your deliverance?

Hear and commit to heart this moving promise that our Father made to His children: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (I Corinthians 10:13). And then let's close with this stirring affirmation that most certainly can and should be our watchword no matter what life hands us: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13).

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