

Devotional: Day 19: Knocked Down, but Upright in Jesus!

Author: Everett

On reading through 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, I found some challenging words the apostle Paul writes about. He writes about the afflictions he, and others with him were undergoing.

Paul is referring to the prophecies spoken concerning himself:-

Acts 9:16 "... For I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake. "(Jesus speaking)

Acts 20:23 "...the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city saying that bonds and afflictions await me."

Referring to the afflictions that the Thessalonians have heard about and are disturbed, the apostle says the following:-

1. We have been destined for this - vs. 3 (Paul is being real)
2. He goes on to say: For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction - vs. 4
3. And so it came to pass, vs. 4
4. Just as you know. vs. 4

And just in case the Thessalonians had been tempted to despair and give up in fear, thereby destroying all their labour among them, Paul had sent Timothy to them, to spur them on in their faith in Jesus. vs. 5

It is easy enough to see from these verses, that the apostle had been speaking to them about the afflictions spoken of by Jesus and prophesied by others.

There is a sense in which Paul had been speaking of this, not just once or twice but a number of times, prior to their happening.

In effect, he had been saying: Look you only too well remember how many times I told you this is what was going to happen to me and the others; and now see for yourselves, it's even come to pass - exactly like I told you. So, don't be alarmed or shocked!

He is not saying this in a negative manner, of course not! The point he is making is that he and the others are not caught unawares of the affliction; neither are they caught off-guard.

On the other hand, a number of issues could be raised and debated from this passage in view of popular teachings today:-

1. Why did Paul dwell on these words about afflictions?
2. Why did he expect them to come to pass? Why was he so certain they would come to pass?
3. Why did he not claim the promises of God, like the protection promised in Psalm 91 and others?
4. Did he "bring" to fulfillment the afflictions he experienced by speaking of them as he did?
5. Would these words of afflictions come to pass if Paul had not spoken them out?

6. Why did he not rebuke the devil? Why did he not rebuke these words? Plead the blood? Do spiritual warfare?

Obviously, the apostle and others with him were men who were able to hear what the Spirit was saying to them. They could recognise what was going on in and around them. They did not blindly or passively accept things, but learned to put their trust in God. **They knew WHOM they had believed!** They did not have to figure out every single thing.

And the apostle is not the only one who spoke of afflictions and sufferings. Jesus Himself did so too. There came a point in His ministry beyond which Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day - Matt. 16:21

Jesus did not hide His sufferings from His own, but revealed them, along with the truth He would be raised up to life again!

In John 16:33b Jesus says to us: "In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer or take courage, I have overcome the world."

To overcome does not mean to avoid tribulation, dodge it, skip around it, and have protection around our lives so that it does not come near us or near our dwelling.

If our relationship with our God is not able to keep us **IN** the storms of life, and **THROUGH** the storms of life, even when the waters have come up close to our heads, then we do not really have any GOOD NEWS to offer people as it relates to life on earth.

We are called to make up the sufferings of Jesus, in that what He could not possibly endure in His life time, we do as members of His body, and so are able to identify with those around us.

Let us allow the GOOD NEWS of Jesus to work in our own lives so we have something to shout about to the world.