

Each of us carry burdens in this life – problems which are difficult to bear. The cause of these burdens can be many and often cause us anxiety and loss of sleep if we dwell on them. We try to put them out of our mind, but suddenly a seemingly unrelated event will remind us of that which we would rather forget. It could be sickness, financial problems, or a difficult spouse, child, or co-worker. It could be loneliness, or a feeling of being inadequate and worthless. It may be a weakness which we are disgusted with ourselves for having. There are times we just want to give up – to throw in the towel and walk away from the game of life.

Jeremiah was a prophet of God felt this way. He lived in a very difficult time in Judah's history. The northern kingdom of Israel had become so totally corrupt that God wiped them out by sending in the Assyrian army. Two-hundred years later the southern kingdom of Judah was walking down the same path. Sin was rampant. Few people were inclined to listen to the voice of God through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah. ***Jeremiah 11:6-8 Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. (7) For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. (8) Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not.***

These people refused to keep the commandments of the LORD and because of that God declared that Judah would be punished, and Jeremiah was sent to tell the people to willingly take their punishment. But the people continued in their wicked ways and refused to hear the words of God (verse 10). Notice now what the LORD says. ***(11) Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.***

When Jeremiah shared this message with the people, they didn't like it thus he was not a popular prophet. In fact, they were planning attempts on his life. In verses 18-19 we learn that the LORD warned Jeremiah of their plot to ***cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.***

Jeremiah had a difficult time dealing with all of this. He had difficulties understanding why he, the righteous man, endured the scoffing and attempts on his life while the wicked lived lives of ease. ***Jeremiah 12:1-4 Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? (2) Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea,***

***they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins. (3) But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter. (4) How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end.***

Have you been there? We look around and see the ungodly around us doing well while we struggle to simply hang on. Others prosper material and never contribute to the Lord while we sacrifice with our weekly giving and do without some of the luxuries of life. This was the concern of Jeremiah.

God's answer begins in verse 5. ***Jeremiah 12:5 If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?*** In a sense, God is saying if you are having trouble now, how are you going to survive when things get rough? Jeremiah has been running with men through a peaceful, safe country. He has stumbled from the difficulties. He is letting the effort get to him. In the future Jeremiah must run with horses through the thickets of Jordan. This area is known for its lions as referenced in Jer. 49:19 Jeremiah is going to be running faster with more obstacles and dangers.

If a person becomes discouraged in a peaceful land, how are they going to deal with the thickets of life? We ourselves live in a peaceful land. Even the poorest of us are wealthy by the world's standards. We face no oppositions to worshiping God. Few would sincerely ridicule us for our beliefs. And still so many Christians become discouraged. Worshiping God is not worth the effort. Telling others about salvation has become a chore that is easily put off. In a sense we have become like Jeremiah.

There is no guarantee that our peace will continue and should we in the future lose this freedom, what will you do? In view of adversity, would you remain faithful and committed? There are countries today where it is illegal for Christians to gather to worship. Would that stop you? There are countries where you could go to prison for converting someone to Christianity. Would you teach? Some are filled with "*They cannot stop me*" which is false boasting like Peter when he said, "*Lord I'll never deny you!*" I know it is false, because without that opposition, Satan has already stopped them in a peaceful land. When is the last time you spoke to someone about the need to be saved from their sins? I know you know people who are living in sin. When is the last time you

decided to skip services because you didn't really want to go? There are probably some here who do not come for Bible class and have no intention of coming and give a thought about missing.

Let us understand that adversity is a part of life and just because you become a Christian doesn't immune you from such troubles. In fact becoming a Christian might add to them. Trials of life, difficult days will come to each of us. It is what life in this world is about. Oddly enough, we need those trials to develop our spiritual maturity. ***James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; (3) Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. (4) But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.***

Verse 5 talks of wisdom and mentions that we should pray for wisdom. That's good and well but how do you think wisdom will come? By relaxing on a couch watching reruns? You want wisdom? Then look forward to resolving problems in life; problems in your life as well and in the lives of others.

An athlete doesn't become strong by evening strolls through the neighborhood. If you are going to be a strong Christian, then you need to learn to hold on to your faith no matter what Satan throws at you. ***1 Peter 1:6-9 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: (7) That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (8) Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: (9) Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*** While you might have heaviness of heart because of the "manifold temptations": let me remind you of what Paul said about temptations. In short he said that none will be sent which you cannot handle. ***1 Corinthians 10:13 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.***

He will always be there. ***Hebrews 13:5-6 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (6) So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*** Sometimes it seems it would be easier to hold on if there was some great deed which we must conquer. Even easy times can be a trial; while not from others but with ourselves.

Brethren, heaven awaits each of us, if we can just remain steadfast; hold on to the end. ***Hebrews 3:5-6 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those***

*things which were to be spoken after; (6) But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, IF we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.* Skip down to verse 14 and notice the same message being repeated. *Hebrews 3:14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.* Don't let this world wear you down.

Paul encourages us in Galatians 6:9 not to grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. The race is before you. If you are not yet a Christian, will you not run with us to the goal God has set before us? If you are a Christian and tired and discouraged at the length of the race, then get a second wind. The race at the moment is through a flat and peaceful land, learn to run, lean on your brethren if you need to. While thickets may be ahead, we can make it.