

Dear Friend,

In this first month of the new year I have already received several emails and phone calls from Christian friends locally and from around the world and it seems all of their conversations have a common theme ... *"What do I do when my circumstances look bleak and there is little hope of improvement in the future?"* In such times I always refer them to the following passage of scripture:

Pro 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (6) In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Those verses are a lot easier to preach than they are to live ... especially when circumstances turn bad. It seems all of us are "strong in faith" when our circumstances are good. We all "trust in the Lord" when there is some extra money in the bank, food in the pantry, when we are healthy, our job is going good, our children are obedient, etc. But when things go badly and the future looks even worse ... suddenly it seems more difficult to "trust in the Lord" than before.

I love the Hebrew language because every word also paints a picture to help us understand its meaning. The Hebrew word translated "Trust" in the above passage means ... "To hide for refuge." It paints a picture of little, fuzzy, yellow chicks running to hide under the mother chicken's wings if something frightens them. Jesus used that same imagery in the New Testament:

Mat 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!

Jesus was lamenting the fact that even though He taught and ministered there for over three years, Israel (as a whole) did not come to the place where they put their "trust" in Him. They did not "hide for refuge" in Christ and terrible destruction fell upon them instead. The temple itself was destroyed and the people were dispersed from the land for 2,000 years until the nation was finally reestablished in 1948.

When everything seems to be going wrong, is that the time to begin doubting the goodness of the Lord? Is that the time to begin wondering if we can trust Him? For heaven's sake ... NO! Everybody trusts in God when things are going well. It is the mature believer who trusts in God when everything is going wrong. That is the time to step forward even more in worship, praise and adoration of the Lord. That is the time to focus on the goodness of the Lord and the unchanging truth of His Word. Remember ... God cannot lie and His Word will ALWAYS produce what it says.

Psa 46:1-3 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (2) Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; (3) *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

Talk about bad circumstances. The imagery here is pretty rough. Yet the psalmist declares that even if we find ourselves in the midst of overwhelming trouble and problems ... God is a very present help in our time of trouble. Notice in this verse also God is our "refuge." That is another Hebrew word carrying

a very similar image as the first word we looked at. This Hebrew word means ... a shelter ... a place of refuge ... trust. TRUST! There is that simple word again ... TRUST in the Lord.

I well remember Paul and Silas when they had been beaten and imprisoned in Philippi. They had done nothing wrong at all. They had preached the gospel, lead Lydia and her family to the Lord, and cast the devil out of fortune telling girl. Yet now they were in prison, their feet in the stocks, and their backs bleeding from the scourging they had endured. Most modern-day Christians would have begun doubting God and His faithfulness based on such evil circumstances. I can just hear it now, *"We have obeyed you Lord. We evangelized. We cast the devil out of a fortune telling girl. We didn't steal. We didn't lie. We didn't do anything wrong yet look at these horrible circumstances. How can we trust you when everything seems to be going wrong?"* But look at what Paul and Silas did instead:

Act 16:25-26 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. (26) And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

Paul and Silas continued to "trust in the Lord" and committed "all their ways unto Him." They prayed and sang praises unto God at midnight (signifying the darkest hour). They didn't do "silent" prayer or worship either ... for it says all the prisoners heard them. God was so pleased He sent an earthquake to open every prison door and to loosen all their bands. Let us do the same and watch God open every prison door and loose every band of evil circumstances from among us also.

Sue and I love you and appreciate you. We thank God for your generous and giving heart. God bless you!

Your friend and co-laborer,

GARY