

THREE-IN-ONE

THIS IS TRINITY SUNDAY. THE DAY WE CELEBRATE THE TRINITY. EXPLAIN IT? THEOLOGIAN HAVE WRESTLED WITH AN EXPLANATION SINCE THE 4TH CENTURY. WE HAVE USED APPLES AS WELL AS THE CATERPILLAR TO BUTTERFLY PROCESS. HOWEVER, **IF ONE IS HONEST THE TRINITY REMAINS ONE OF THOSE MYSTERIES OF OUR FAITH.** THERE ARE OTHER MYSTERIES OF OUR FAITH, THE SACRAMENTS BEING ANOTHER. I AM TURNING TO OUR NEW TESTAMENT READING IN ROMANS CONTAINING ANOTHER THREE-IN-ONE THAT CAN BE USEFUL IN OUR DAILY LIFE AND ON OUR SPIRITUAL WALK.

ROMANS 5-3-5 SAYS "We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our hope. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love."

HERE IS A THREE-IN-ONE FAITH BUILDING PROCESS.

PROBLEMS, TROUBLES OR TRIALS DEVELOP ENDURANCE, ENDURANCE DEVELOPS CHARACTER AND CHARACTER STRENGTHENS OUR HOPE. NOW PETER SAYS IT SLIGHTLY IN A DIFFERENT IN THE FIRST CHAPTER OF 2 PETER VERSES 5-9 *"So don't lose a minute in building on what you've been given, complementing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness, and generous love, each dimension fitting into and developing the others. With these qualities active and growing in your lives, no grass will grow under your feet, no day will pass without its reward as you mature in your experience of our Master Jesus. Without these qualities you can't see what's right before you, oblivious that your old sinful life has been wiped off the books."*

IN BOTH READINGS WE CAN DISCOVER **PROBLEMS ARE NOT JUST PROBLEMS, BUT OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD OUR FAITH AND BECOME MORE CHRIST-LIKE.** PAUL USES WORDS LIKE PROBLEM, TROUBLE OR TRIAL. THE TRANSLATION FROM THE GREEK MEANS "PRESSURE", WHICH I AM SURE FOR MANY OF US CAN RELATE TO AND IS A VERY ACCURATE WORD FOR OUR DAILY LIFE. "PRESSURE" TO DO THIS OR PRESSURE TO PERFORM, THE "PRESSURE" OF OTHERS EXPECTATIONS, PRESSURE, PRESSURE, AND MORE PRESSURE. **MUCH OF THAT TYPE OF PRESSURE IS SELF-IMPOSED WHETHER WE WANT TO ADMIT IT OR NOT.** HOWEVER, THE **PRESSURE** OR **PROBLEMS** MENTIONED IN THESE VERSES ARE BROUGHT TO US AND **HOW WE HANDLE THEM CAN BY OUR OWN CHOOSING BRING US CLOSER TO GOD AND PRODUCE SOMETHING POSITIVE OR DRIVE US FARTHER AWAY AND BRING NEGATIVE AFFECTS ON OUR LIFE.**

HOW DO WE CHOOSE TO "HANDLE" THE PEOPLE GOD BRINGS INTO OUR LIFE TO HELP US GROW? YOU KNOW THAT PERSON THAT TALKS TOO MUCH, OR THE CHILD THAT MIGHT NOT BE AS WELL BEHAVED AS OUR CHILDREN WERE! THERE MAY BE PEOPLE IN OUR LIFE THAT WE AVOID, DON'T SPEAK TO OR IRRITATE US IN SOME WAY, EVEN AT CHURCH!

REMEMBER THOSE WORDS JESUS SPOKE HIMSELF ABOUT THE LOG IN OUR EYE AND THE SPECK IN OUR BROTHER'S EYE? YOU KNOW THE VERY THINGS THAT IRRITATE US MAY BE A BLIND SPOT FOR US.

WHEN I WORKED THERE WAS A WIFE, ANN, OF ONE OF THE MEN I WORKED WITH, AND WHENEVER WE GOT TOGETHER FOR A FAREWELL PARTY OR HOLIDAY PARTY ANN JUST DETESTED THIS OTHER LADY, BETTY, BECAUSE SHE TALKED SO MUCH. OVER THE YEARS I NOTICED THAT WHEN THE TWO WERE AT THE SAME EVENT, ANN COULDN'T CONTROL THE CONVERSATION BECAUSE BETTY WAS TALKING SO MUCH. **THE VERY THING ANN DID NOT LIKE ABOUT BETTY WAS THE VERY THING SHE HERSELF DID!!! SHE COULD NOT "SEE THE LOG IN HER EYE". SO NEXT TIME YOU BECOME IRRITATED WITH SOMEONE, ASK YOURSELF THIS QUESTION "IS GOD TELLING ME SOMETHING HERE? DO I NEED TO LOOK AT MYSELF AND CHANGE?"**

I TRULY BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS PEOPLE COME INTO OUR LIVES IN ORDER FOR US TO GROW. IF HE DIDN'T THEN HOW WOULD WE GROW? MOST LIKELY WE REMAIN IN THAT COMFORT ZONE WE HAVE GOTTEN USED TO.

TO PERSEVERE MEANS "TO ABIDE WITH". IT IS MUCH EASIER TO ABIDE WITH CHRIST WHEN THINGS ARE GOING GOOD. HOWEVER, WHAT IS OUR REACTION WHEN THINGS AREN'T SO GOOD, CAN WE ABIDE WITH CHRIST THEN? WHEN WE REALIZE THAT THE PRESSURE IS NOT A REASON TO QUIT, BUT THAT IT IS A REASON TO BE CLOSER TO CHRIST. THIS IS A VERY DIFFICULT THING TO DO. MANY TIMES WE FEEL LIKE SHOUTING BACK AT GOD AND TAKING CONTROL! GOD LOVES US SO MUCH HE LISTENS, THEN WAITS FOR US PATIENTLY TO REALIZE TO LOVE AND TRUST HIM BACK. THIS IS THE PEACE PAUL IS TALKING ABOUT IN THE EARLY VERSES.

THINK ABOUT THIS VIVID PICTURE TOLD WITH THESE WORDS. **A KOREAN CHRISTIAN WHEN PRESSURED BY THE COMMUNISTS SAID "WE ARE LIKE NAILS: THE HARDER YOU HIT US THE DEEPER YOU DRIVE US" NOW THAT IS PERSEVERANCE!!! HOW WELL DO YOU HANDLE THE PRESSURE WHEN IT COMES KNOCKING AT YOUR DOOR? WHAT PART DOES YOUR FAITH, LOVING AND TRUSTING IN GOD, PLAY IN GOING THROUGH THE PRESSURE? DO WE COME THROUGH THE PRESSURE SMARTER, WISER, AND WITH MORE FAITH IN GOD AND HIS PROMISES? THIS THREE-IN-ONE PROCESS IS A PATH TO SHOW US THE WAY.**

THERE IS A QUOTE BY LORD REITH, AN INDIVIDUAL WHO CAME UP WITH THE IDEA TO USE RADIO TO EDUCATE THE MASSES. HE ONCE SAID "***I do not like crises, but I do like the opportunities they provide***". **PAUL AND THIS GENTLEMAN WOULD HAVE GOTTEN ALONG REALLY WELL I BELIEVE. THEY ARE BOTH SAYING THE SAME THING – LOOK AT THE PRESSURE, THE PROBLEM, AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GROW.**

WE ALL HAVE AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER FACED A PROBLEM IN OUR SCHOOLING. WHAT DID WE DO? THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A TIME OR TWO WE COULD NOT SOLVE IT, BUT FOR THE MOST PART WE PERSEVERED AND FELT PRETTY GOOD ABOUT OUR SELF FOR “CONQUERING” THE PROBLEM. THEN WHEN THE NEXT PROBLEM CAME ALONG WE HAD THE CONFIDENCE TO SOLVE IT.

PAUL IS SHOWING US THE SAME, EXCEPT WE ARE APPLYING THE IDEA TO THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF LIFE. ALWAYS REMEMBER GOD CAN BE TRUSTED THROUGH ALL OUR DIFFICULTIES. **CHARACTER IS A PRODUCT OF OUR PERSEVERANCE IN THIS THREE-IN-ONE PROCESS.** SOMEONE TOLD ME ONCE **CHARACTER IS WHO WE ARE WHEN NOBODY IS LOOKING.** PAUL, IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT USED “TRIBULATION” INSTEAD OF PROBLEM BECAUSE PEOPLE OF HIS DAY KNEW THAT WORD CAME FROM THE LATIN TRIBULUM, WHICH WAS A HEAVY TIMBER WITH SPIKES IN IT USED FOR THRESHING GRAIN, SEPARATING THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF.

OUR PROBLEMS, OUR TRIBULATIONS, SEPARATE THOSE TRAITS IN OUR CHARACTER THAT WE DO NOT NEED OR HINDER US FROM GROWING IN FAITH. JAMES TALKED ABOUT THE SAME PROCESS IN CHAPTER 1:2 “*Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.*” OR PAUL AGAIN DRIVES HOME THE POINT TO US ALL IN I THESSALONIANS 5:18 *Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*” **GOD WILL USE ANYTHING THAT COMES OUR WAY TO GIVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW IN FAITH AND INCREASE OUR TRUST IN HIM. IF WE DON'T THIS TIME, HIS GRACE, HIS FORGIVENESS WILL BE THERE, AND FOR SURE ANOTHER “OPPORTUNITY” WILL COME ALONG!!!**

WHEN OUR CHARACTER OF BEING MORE CHRIST-LIKE STRENGTHENED THEN HOPE IS INCREASED. WHAT IS HOPE? HEBREWS 11:1 “*Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.*” HOPE IS TO HAVE CONFIDENCE AND TRUST IN GOD AND THAT IS OUR FAITH, IS IT NOT? WHEN WE GO THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME AND ARE TEACHABLE THEN WE CAN REJOICE AS WE TRUSTED IN GOD AND HE CAME THROUGH AS HE HAS PROMISED.

THE HYMN IN OUR BOOK BY ANDRE CROUCH “*THROUGH IT ALL*” DOESN'T HAVE ALL THE VERSES, THEY ARE ON THE INSERT YOU HAVE. TAKE TIME TO LOOK AT THE WORDS. THIS MAN KNEW THE PROCESS!!! **IF WE FOCUS ON THE PROCESS AND NOT THE PAIN WE CAN REJOICE KNOWING GOD IS WITH US “THROUGH IT ALL”.**

REMEMBER PAUL IN THE OPENING VERSES OF TODAY'S READING TALKS OF OUR STANDING WITH GOD – BEING JUSTIFIED BY FAITH. THE PEACE WE HAVE WITH GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. PAUL SAYS IN VERSE 2 “*we exult in the hope of the glory of god*” THE WORD “EXULT” TRANSLATES HERE TO MEAN “REJOICE”!! PAUL WAS A MAN WHO IN 2 CORINTHIANS 11:25 TOLD US “*Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea.*” AND AFTER ALL THAT HE STILL SAYS REJOICE AND HAVE PEACE BECAUSE OF WHAT JESUS CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US.

HERE IS A PRAYER TO GOD TO POINT OUT WHAT EXACTLY PAUL IS TELLING US IN ROMANS TODAY...

I asked God to take away my pride.

God said, "No". It is not for me to take away, but for you to give it up.

I asked God to grant me patience.

God said, "No". Patience is a byproduct of tribulations; it isn't granted, it is earned.

I asked God to give me happiness.

God said "No". I give you blessings, happiness is up to you.

I asked God to spare me pain.

God said "No". Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and bring you closer to me.

I asked God to make my spirit grow.

God said "No". You must grow on your own, but I will prune you to make you fruitful.

I asked God for all things that I might enjoy life.

God said "No". I will give you life so that you may enjoy all things.

I asked God to help me LOVE others, as much as He loves me.

God said, "Ahhh, finally you have the idea!"

GRACE, PEACE, WE CAN HAVE IT ALL AS THE SAYING GOES THESE DAYS, DESPITE THE PROBLEMS OR TRIALS THAT WILL SURELY COME OUR WAY IN THE FORM OF CIRCUMSTANCES OR PEOPLE. WHEN WE "**PERSEVERE**" THEN OUR **CHARACTER IS BUILT UP AND OUR HOPE, OUR CONFIDENCE INCREASES IN TRUSTING GOD** THAT THE NEXT TIME A PROBLEM OR TRIALS COMES OUR WAY WE WILL GET THROUGH IT.

ENDURANCE, CHARACTER, AND HOPE – A TRINITY TO GROW OUR FAITH.

AMEN.