

MEN'S LIFE BLOOMINGTON & GOD @ WORK

Tuesday, February 11, 2020

Keeping Never Ending Faith in an Ever Changing World

Overview: Nearly everyone agrees that we are living in a fast-paced, ever changing world. A grandparent 150 years ago could say to his newborn grandchild, "Your childhood will be just like mine." Yet today a five-year old cannot even say that to a newborn sibling. So how does a book written nearly 2000+ years ago still apply today. How can our faith endure in our fast paced lives?

God At Work In My Life: David Hudson

Segment Questions:

- The two quotes that inspired the study really deal with difference of faith and perseverance in the believer and the non-believer. What are your thoughts? Should they be different? Should they be the same? WHY?
- What do you think about the Voice of the Martyrs quote compared to the persecution or ridicule we face in the US? If you lived in one of the 40 countries listed, could you do it? What do you think would be the biggest challenge?
- Who, or what passage, or truth is your biggest source of encouragement and inspiration from the Bible when it comes to strengthening your faith?
- Hebrews 12: 1-3 Discuss some of the things we as men need to "throw off" to keep our faith strong.
 - What are some of things we "fix" our eyes on, instead of Jesus?
 - What does running with perseverance look like in your life?
 - Realizing that Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of FAITH; how does that impact the running of your race?

Action Questions:

- What do you need to do each day to keep your faith strong and to stand firm in the face of persecution? Who/what can we turn to?
- Are you helping to strengthen the faith of others? Can you think of family or friends who might benefit from stronger faith? What can you do to help?
- Are there organizations, churches, you might want to support that are encouraging those who are suffering persecution?

Personal Prayer: Lord, we thank you that YOU are the pioneer and perfecter of our FAITH. Let us live our lives from the victory you give. Help us focus on you and run our race with perseverance. Thank you for giving us eternal life through you!

Introduction

Let's look at the two quotes that are the basis for this lesson today. (Appendix). I found it disturbing that Admiral Stockdale, a man who studied and taught Greek Philosophy, seemed to have a better grasp on faith than the Christians Mr. French refers to in his article in the National Review. Stockdale said he never lost faith that he would get out; and he confronted his current reality. It seems that according to David French, the Christians he encounters don't want confrontation. They do not know or want to face their current reality. *(DISCLAIMER: I am not saying that all Christians are not strong in their faith. I am sure Mr. French would agree, but I believe his experience with Christians all over the country is a strong basis for his statement.)*

First let's look at reality: Matthew 5: 11-12, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who went before you."

See the Voice of Martyrs info: We see many Christians whose persecution reality is far greater than the struggle of Merry Christmas vs Happy Holidays....not trying to be funny, but wanting to be real.

If we know we will be persecuted, (the above scripture doesn't say "if") then how do we deal with it? How do we keep strong in our faith?

HEBREWS 11.....The faith chapter. A STRONG narrative about heroes of the faith that should be an inspiration and encouragement to us.

Hebrews 12 1-3 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

---Throw off, get rid of sin, in your life that impacts your faith! Could that be pride? Could that be taking a world view more often than a Biblical view?

---Are we running with perseverance, or do we prefer quick fixes and fast results? Do we have patience to wait on God? Are we patient enough to run our race in His will?

---We all have our own races to run. We are not running our spouses' race, our kids' race, our parents' race.....the race is marked out for US.

---We are to fix (focus) our eyes on Christ. In my opinion too many of us are focused on the wrong things!

To me here is the most important thing: Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of OUR FAITH. How is He? Simple. HE HAS ALREADY RUN THE RACE. He endured the JOY of the race set before him. He finished the perfect race; so we can run a race that does NOT have to be perfect! We are not running a race and TRYING to win....We are running a race where we know WE WILL WIN because of what Christ has done for us.

IF WE TRULY KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURE.....HOW CAN WE EVER GIVE UP OUR FAITH!!!!

Appendix

The Stockdale Paradox

Retain faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties.

AND at the same time

Confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.

“In my travels around the country, one thing has become crystal clear to me. Christians are not prepared for the social consequences of the profound cultural shifts —especially in more secular parts of the nation. They’re afraid to say what they believe, not because they face the kind of persecution that Christians face overseas but because they’re simply not prepared for any meaningful adverse consequences in their careers or with their peers.”

David French “Another Pop-Culture Christian Loses His Faith” National Review Online, 13 August 2019

In more than 40 nations around the world today Christians are being persecuted for their faith. In some of these nations it is illegal to own a Bible, to share your faith Christ, change your faith or teach your children about Jesus. Those who boldly follow Christ—in spite of government edict or radical opposition—can face harassment, arrest, torture and even death. Yet Christians continue to meet for worship and to witness for Christ, and the church in restricted nations is growing.

VOICE OF THE MARTYRS