Finding Strength and Blessing in the Day of Affliction

Jer.16:19 says, "O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction..."

     Jeremiah 16:19 finds Jeremiah expressing his total dependence upon God in the day of the greatest affliction in the history of Israel. God had stated in Jer. 15:16 that he was weary with repenting with Israel's backsliding and would, with an outstretched hand of judgment, destroy them. Jeremiah expresses his love and loyalty in complete dependence , in the words, O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction."  In Jer.17:17 we find these words, "Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil."

Jeremiah was earnestly imploring the LORD to not be a terror unto him as he was unto the backsliders, because he had chosen in his love and loyalty, to make his God his only hope. May we be challenged and encouraged by his example to make our Lord Jesus Christ our one and only hope in our day of affliction, when horror and terror besets us. Affliction by definition has to do with adversity and distress, accompanied by mental anguish and the fear of the unknown as well as the known. The antidote to this unhealthy and destabilizing state of mind is to choose, as Jeremiah did, to allow our Lord to be our strength and refuge of peace. Our hope of deliverance from mental anguish and distress does not rest in man's counsel or even medicinal means. Jeremiah said in 17:5, "Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, (his strength and hope) and whose heart departeth from the LORD." The moment we stop trusting our Lord, our heart departs from him.

 Jer.17:7-8 says, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, (or in our day of affliction) neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Precious saints of God, may we choose to be that tree! Jeremiah makes it clear that there is an abundant life of spiritual lushness and fruitfulness for those who choose to place their trust and hope in the Lord. The common denominator of trust and hope is faith. Never forget that faith is a part of the ninefold fruit of the Spirit in Gal.5:22. It is a fruit that God grows in us when we choose to put off the old man and put on the new man, which is putting on Christ, Having crucified the old man at this point, the life that we now live, we live by the faith of the Son of God, according to Gal.2:20.

It is vital to understand, and so fitting in this context, that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. The Spirit of God and of Christ uses the word of God to produce and build our faith. Did you happen to notice that this tree is planted by the waters, and spreadeth out her roots by the river? God knew when he wrote this that the secret to this trees' health and growth, as well as strength and fruitfulness was the waters, just as the living water of God's word is our source of faith and hope and trust, as well as our spiritual health and growth and strength and fruitfulness.

God's word teaches us that we can choose the peace of God rather than anxiety, worry, distress and mental anguish in our day of affliction, if we choose to be that tree of God, and allow our Lord, through his Spirit, to water our souls with the living waters of Ph.4:4-7. God provides his remedy or antidote for mental torment and destabilization in these words, "Be careful for nothing; but in Every Thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep (guard and protect) your hearts and minds (from the ravages of afflictions and adversities) through Christ Jesus." (through the ministration of his Spirit)

As much as we might desire the fruits of this tree of God, this desire will remain out of our reach if we do not allow him to provide his living waters for our roots. We absorb these waters by a faith that he provides, allowing our roots to spread out and draw divinely designed nourishment from all of God's rivers of life, from Genesis to Revelation. May we choose the peace of God that passes all human understanding, in the midst of adversity and affliction, by being well rooted in the nourishment for our soul found in Ph.4:4-7.

Let us look back at Jer.17:12 where Jeremiah seems to put the icing on the cake with these words, "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary." It is the design and desire of God our Father for his children to dwell with him in his dwelling place all of our conscious waking hours. He wants our full attention as he seeks to minister his word, as living waters, to his trees that are planted by him beside the river of God. Psa.36:8-9 says, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness (rich blessings) of thy house; (sanctuary) and THOU SHALT make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee (in his sanctuary) is the fountain of life.."

God calls his sanctuary his secret place in Psa.91:1 and elsewhere. This is our place of strong refuge where we find a continual source of strength and blessing, even in our day of affliction and adversity. Sad to say, this secret place of refuge and strength and blessings seems undiscovered by the average professing believer. Faith and trust and hope, as well as strength and blessing, along with continuing fruitfulness is not only born here, but sustained and maintained here.

Jer.16:17 says, "For mine eyes (God's) are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes."

Brethren, let us allow God's Spirit to search our hearts and minds today, and reveal any lack of faith, manifested through worry, distress, and fretting that has caused us to banish faith and trust, hope and peace, as well as blessing and fruitfulness. May we humbly and sorrowfully yield our spirit to the Holy Spirit, confessing our iniquities, and fleeing to our God ordained secret place of sanctuary. I Jn. 1:7 says, "But IF we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

May we now truly say, with Jeremiah, O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction!

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