

Making A Difference In A Difficult World

"who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14

Guided Growth with Pastor Keith @ CBC Sunday, Oct 16th

The Bible teaches us that this world is not a playground for God's people, but a battleground!

(2 Tim. 2:3,4) Satan, as *"the god of this world"* (2 Cor 4:4) uses the *"things of this world"* to distract, deceive, and destroy our commitment to God. (1Jn 2:15,16) The Bible is clear that this world will become increasingly hostile to God, His purposes and His People. (1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim 3;4) In Luke 17:26-30 Jesus warned that: *"as it was in the days of Noah...Lot... Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed!"*.

Walking with (abiding in) Christ is no guarantee of an easy ride!

Jesus spent his last night with the apostles warning them of the difficulties to come!

Jn 15:19 *"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."*

In Jn 16 Jesus continues to warn of the reality of spiritual warfare concluding with: vs 33

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; (tharseo: courage) I have overcome the world." (See 1 Jn 4;4; 5:4)

In John 17 Jesus is praying for us: 14 *"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."*

15 *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."*

Our natural tendency is to "go along to get along." But what if the world is "going" in the wrong direction? Many try to remain obscure and unobtrusive hoping to avoid conflict.

While many have been shipwrecked by listening to the "Siren Song" of the world,

Others have chosen to walk with God, Making a difference in a Difficult World.

DIRECTION: Both Nehemiah and Esther were captives in Persia who had found themselves in positions of influence. They led safe and relatively secure lives and could have avoided many of the difficulties that affected others. Difficulties often prompt decisions. Both Decided that, instead of remaining silent and protecting their positions, they would stand up and seek to use their influence to make a difference.

1. THEIR DIFFICULTIES:

A. ESTHER: (Between Ezra 6 and 7)

- 1) Ahasuerus (Xerxes) was the son of Darius and ruled from 485 to 465.
- 2) His Queen (Vashti) had been banished for disrespecting his wishes. (1:12)
- 3) Esther was chosen to replace Vashti in 479 BC (Esther 2)
- 4) Satan was at work (through Haman) seeking to destroy Israel. (Ch. 3)
Haman was a descendent of the Amalekite King Agag Killed by Saul in 1 Sam. 15!
- 5) There were some 15 million Jews in his Kingdom most of whom were spiritually indifferent. (*Most had ignored King Cyrus' decree to return to Israel.*)
These all had a "death sentence" from Haman and the King.

B. NEHEMIAH: The events occurred about 50 years after the episode in Esther.

- 1) Zerubbabel led the first group of Jews home in 537 BC to rebuild the Temple.
- 2) Ezra led a second group back in 458 BC to Purify the Temple and worship of God.
- 3) In 445 BC (almost 100 years after the first return) Jerusalem was still in heaps and without defense. That left the people discouraged, vulnerable and surrounded by hostile enemies.

2. THE DIFFICULTIES LED TO THEIR DECISIONS:

A. ESTHER: She would get involved:

- 1) Her Risk: It could cost her everything. *"If I perish, I perish"* (Esther 4:16)

- 2) Her Reasoning: God may have put her in this position *"for such a time as this!"* (4:14)
- 3) Her resolve: She would use all of her Influence and intelligence to try to make a difference by:
 - a) **Prayer** support from her friends and the other Jews. (Esther 4:16)
 - b) **Planning**: Planned and prepared two banquets. (Esther 5,7)
 - c) **Petitioning** the King. (Esther 7)

C. **NEHEMIAH**: He would get involved:

- 1) The Risk: No one was allowed to be sad or upset in the King's presence.
(NOTE: *As the Cup Bearer, his countenance was the most watched.*)
- 2) The Reasoning: How can he enjoy life when his people were in such trouble.
 - a) **Prayer** (Nehemiah 1)
 - b) **Planning** (Neh 2) 4 months elapsed between chapters 1 and 2.
 - c) **Petitioning** the King. (Neh. 2)

3. THEIR DECISION MADE THE DIFFERENCE:

A. **ESTHER**:

- 1) Haman (and his sons) were executed. (7:9,10; 10:10)
- 2) The Jews were able to legally defend themselves and spoil those that attacked them.
- 3) Mordecai (Esther's uncle) became the Prime Minister. (8:1,2)
- 4) Less than 10 years later Ezra is granted permission to lead a second group back to Israel
which led to a great national revival. (See Neh. 8)

B. **NEHEMIAH**:

- 1) He brings a clear purpose to God's People that unifies them.
- 2) He establishes a system of defense for the people and rebuilds the walls.
- 3) He becomes the Governor and confronts the corruption & works with Ezra to re-establish God's laws.

Conclusion:

1. Difficulties are Inevitable.

- Many are a byproduct of corruption and sin. Pr 14:34
- These difficulties affected the good as well as the bad or indifferent. Pr. 29:2

2. Difficulties are **Motivating!** *(They produced Opportunities for us to make wise Decisions.)*

Men, like streams, will naturally seek the path of least resistance.

- It is often the difficulties that prompt and produce the decisions.

"Adversity is the diamond dust heaven polishes its jewels with." Pastor Robert Leighton (1611-1684)

Mal. 3:17 *"they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels"*

3. Difficulties are **Revealing!** Mal 3:18 *"Then shall ye ... discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."* (see also 1 Cor 11:18,19)

4. Difficulties are Determining: Whether our lives "Make a Difference".

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Psa 90:12)

The word number here means to weigh out or appoint.

The Bible is filled with examples of those who decided to stand on principle in the face of persecution. Will you be one of them!

Hebrews 11:26 (Moses) *"Esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."* **Do You?**

Toward end of the 19th century Swedish Chemist, Alfred Nobel awoke one morning to read his own obituary.

"Alfred Nobel, who invented dynamite died yesterday. He devised a way for more people to be killed than ever before."

Actually it was Alfred's brother who died, but the account had a profound effect on him. He decided that he wanted to be remembered for more than inventing a device that could kill. He then established the "Nobel Peace Prize."

He later wrote: "Every man ought to have a chance to correct his own epitaph and to write a new one in mid stream."

I learn as the years roll onward, And leave the past behind;
That much I had counted sorrow, But proved that my Lord was Kind.
That many a flower I longed for, Had a hidden thorn of pain;
And many a rugged bypath, Led to fields of Golden grain."

OT Deever

The tests of life are to make, not break us. Trouble may demolish a man's business but build up his character. The blow at the outer man may be the greatest blessing to the inner man. If God, then, puts or permits anything hard in our lives, be sure that the real peril, the real trouble, is that we shall lose if we flinch or rebel. Maltbie D. Babcock (1858-1901)

When written in Chinese the word crisis is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity.

-- John F. Kennedy

1 Standing by a purpose true,
Heeding God's command,
Honor them, the faithful few!
All hail to Daniel's Band!

Refrain:

Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!

2 Many mighty men are lost,
Daring not to stand,
Who for God had been a host
By joining Daniel's Band. (Refrain)

3 Many giants, great and tall,
Stalking thro' the land,
Headlong to the earth would fall,
If met by Daniel's Band. (Refrain)

4 Hold the gospel banner high;
On to vict'ry grand!
Satan and his host defy,
And shout for Daniel's Band. (Refrain)

PP Bliss