



Just a Day? *It's Worth It*

October 11, 2015

Whether a Christ-follower or not. Louis Armstrong was right, *It IS a Wonderful World*. So was Van Morrison when he sang "*There'll Be Days Like This*" when everything goes our way.

But we all, w/o exception, have problems. **Life is difficult** Going to school can be challenging. All the other kids aren't always happy to see us nor do they always treat us with utmost respect. We experience painful rejection. The subjects are hard. You might be good in algebra and bad in geometry. Getting a job can be challenging and holding it nowadays can make us anxious. Some people lose their jobs because they deserved to; but many times people lose their jobs because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Investing money carries risk and people can lose a lot when the stock market plunges. There's also the reality of rejection when you date. And if you marry, there will be some serious disagreements. Sometimes these matters lead to divorce. That's why the marriage vows states: *For better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness & in health*. Some fall prey to addictions of one form or another. All of us will experience health issues. There are certain preventative methods we can take but no one can permanently game the system.

Suffering is chosen But there's another type of difficulty that is actually chosen. It centers on which kingdom we're serving: Kingdom Of Self or the Kingdom of God. The "BENEFITS" of Kingdom of Self living is that it emphasizes self-preservation and promotion. It focuses on instant gratification and pleasing ourselves. The COST is that it doesn't ask you to do anything for anyone else. Plus, it has no promises for an outcome. Its reward system is totally earthbound. Serving God's Kingdom has COSTS: It's risky, demanding, and counter-intuitive. It tells us to serve God and others, not ourselves. That's unnatural. BUT, there's a huge BENEFIT upside of Kingdom living. It gives LIFE: a better life now because there's meaning attached to what we're doing; and eternal life in the world to come. There comes a time when we CHOOSE to move from one kingdom to another. SAUL did it – and he became a new man with a new name, Paul, with a new

mission in life (blessing the church instead of persecuting it). Have you moved to the new kingdom? To not choose to move is a choice in itself.

In the midst of chosen suffering, Paul

2 Cor 4:16-18 *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

1.) **Therefore**...Resurrection emphasis in 4:14-15. Jesus raised him and will raise us – these are our benefits.

we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away

Even the best servants get weary. But even though they grow weary and are wasting away, there's another context. A few verses before: 2 Cor 4:7-9 ***But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.***

He uses 4 words:

"hard pressed" (**stressed**) Dealing with difficult people. Paul was under pressure and harassed. The Greek word means to treat with hostility. Anguish.

"perplexed" (**confused**) - he doesn't understand it and doesn't have a way out). He doesn't know what to do and even if he did he might not have the resources to pull it off, whatever it was. He was "at a loss" in more ways than one. His experience is like that of some of the greatest people of the Bible: Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Naomi, Esther, Daniel, John the Baptist, the disciples; even Jesus was "hard pressed and perplexed" in the Garden of Gethsemane. These people didn't do anything wrong – in fact they did everything right! Life is hard....live long enough and something will happen to you, but this next word introduces a new component. This is one of choice. And this is something that few of us experience.

"persecuted" (**pursued**) The word carries the idea that someone is chasing you. Jesus said it was going to happen to those who followed Him (and it did). Paul knew it would, too. He had several near death experiences.

We know there is persecution in the world. I was reading the other day about ISIS in Iraq. The article was about a monk in a monastery – ISIS is 2 miles away. He said the region has known terrible hardships before, but nothing like what's happening now. These are savage people. Of course, they are threatening not only Christians and Jews, but the infidels within Islam.

Who is persecuted today in America? Maybe students. Those in High School describe difficulties in living in a culture where Christianity isn't always favored.

But there is an agenda on some college campuses. In the last few weeks we've seen a shooting in the church in Charleston – Christians were targeted though that was also a racist thing. But Christians were definitely targeted in Oregon. It's ironic that Paul, whose name had been "Saul" and he was described as a persecutor of the church, is now describing the other result – the persecutor is now being persecuted. It was seeing the courage of a man named Stephen, as he was being stoned to death, that so touched the heart of Saul that he couldn't get it out of his mind. As a result of Stephen's martyrdom, Saul was converted. Even his name changed to Paul.

"struck down" (rejected) He doesn't live in denial of his problem. He's honest. He's vulnerable. Following Jesus doesn't mean "MORE" of everything. There's a downside to following Jesus.

Disconnect between Paul's experience and ours. We DON'T want to be socially awkward, to stand out or to be the weird one, be the person who talks too loudly, who shows exceeding earnestness and voices opinions too rapidly. We want to be liked and to have lots of "friends" and "followers" on social media. We hesitate to get too deeply involved, to speak up boldly and to stand up for a cause if it means someone might reject us.

He's "hard pressed" but not crushed. He's perplexed, but he's not in despair. He's persecuted, but not abandoned. He's struck down, but not destroyed.

2.) **continue to serve** Who would've blamed Paul if he'd had a pity party? He had problems, he just isn't ultimately defined by them. He was inwardly strong but outwardly focused. He had many reasons to quit. But he didn't. He persevered. He was like a sower who continued to sow good seed. He did something, too.

3.) **keep the end in mind** *"eternal glory that far outweighs them all"*

Our sermon journal (p. 50) says: "Not only will most our rewards be delayed, but sometimes we will suffer for our efforts. This is why it's so important to keep a 'long view' of the servant life."

Everyone will suffer and we will die. What do I want to live/die for?

Keep your eyes on Christ. **RESURRECTION** = THE KEY! We are NOT earth bound.

We are U.S. citizens but we are citizens of a far great place, too. **Eternal glory that far outweighs them all.** If in Christ, you'll be in the most incredible, unbelievable place! **Are you?**

When Christianity was pitted against the forces of the North Koreans, the communists got a young pastor and took his wife and his 2 children and led them in a grave. They told him: "Either you stop preaching Jesus or we will bury your wife and children." He said: "I'll stop." Then his wife stepped forward with her

children and got into the freshly dug grave. As she held her children and as they tossed dirt on top of them, she said: *“Children, tonight we’re going to eat supper with the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.”* They buried them alive. There was a large group of people who saw this. They realized they’d seen a power greater than that of the North Korean government. They knew that there was something special about Jesus Christ. This was one of the events which helped trigger an unprecedented growth of the church in Korea. As has been said: *The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.* Living for Christ sometimes means we must have courage to boldly speak up.

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.* We’ll be blessed if we persevere...and we will receive the crown of life.