

When the Future is Uncertain

April 17, 2016 am

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. Isaiah 43:2

At 4:30 pm, Malibu-Lost Hills Sheriff's Station responded to a vehicle accident on Malibu Canyon Road, 1/2 mile south of the tunnel. The male adult driver lost control of his vehicle, nearly going over the side [of a cliff]. The driver became disoriented and exited the vehicle and was struck by a passing tour bus. [Fortunately for the man, he was conscious and breathing on our arrival and was treated by our partners at the Los Angeles County Fire Department and California Highway Patrol. He was transported to a local hospital for treatment.]

Sometimes when I think about the future, it feels like everything is out of control and I am in danger of going off a cliff. Then when I take a really close look at the future on earth I feel like I've been hit by a bus.

Last week we talked about how our long-term future is set and secure if we are Christians. We are to look past our time on earth to the joy of heaven. Today I want us to think about how do we live between now and heaven?

Maybe you are about to graduate from college and have no idea what you will do next. Perhaps you just lost your job. Or you've just moved to a new area where you know no one. Maybe you've just started a new job and feel overwhelmed at the challenges that loom before you. Maybe you're single and wonder if you'll ever get married. Do you have a chronic health issue that will not be resolved? Have you had a setback and wonder if you can make a comeback? What do we do when the future is uncertain?

1. We must wait on God

Isaiah 42:16 *"I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, In paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them And rugged places into plains. These are the things I will do, And I will not leave them undone."*

God is often at work in ways we cannot see. **God will do things in our lives that He knows we need that we don't know we need.** God knows our hearts. God knows the plans He has for us. God wants our hearts to long for His plans for us.

God's timing is always right. His desire for us is more than our temporary happiness. God wants our lives to glorify Him.

God wants us to want Him more than anything He could give us. Would you rather have a lot of money or have God? Having a lot of money is no guarantee against suffering.

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. Isaiah 43:2

God wants us to obey Him. We often want God to obey us. When Lazarus got sick, Mary and Martha wanted Jesus to come right then! They were focused on their situation. They did not think about what was going on with Jesus. Jesus was on His way to the cross.

But they could only see their situation and their problems. Suffering can cause us to get tunnel vision. Mary and Martha wanted Jesus to do what they wanted Him to do. They wanted Jesus to obey them. Jesus had a plan they could not see. He was going to allow Lazarus to die so He could raise Him again. Why? So God would be glorified.

John 11:4 *“This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”*

It is not our responsibility to tell God what to do. We are to seek to obey Him and our number one priority should be to seek to bring glory to God. God may work a miraculous intervention in our lives. If He does – be sure He gets the glory.

God may not rescue us. God may not instantly fix our problem. We can glorify God in waiting. We can glorify Him in the midst of suffering. Life is not fair. Things will not always go our way. Glorify God anyway!

2. We must take our worries to God

We are a worried people living in a worried nation. I believe that worry and fear give Satan a foothold in our lives. Please follow the logic:

Ephesians 4:26-27 *BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.*

Ephesians 4:27 says “do not give the devil an opportunity.” An instruction to limit anger immediately precedes that verse.

1 Peter 5:6-9 *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith*

1 Peter 5:8 says “the devil is like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.” An instruction to cast all our anxiety on God immediately precedes that verse.

God does not want us to worry. When we focus on our worries it reflects a lack of faith and gives the devil a foothold in our lives.

1 Peter 5:9 begins by saying we are to resist Satan – firm in our faith.

We worry when we don't understand what is happening or what is going to happen. We worry when we are not in control. We like to control the outcome, but when we are in charge it does not require any faith.

Hebrews 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. NASU*

God often leads us into darkness to build our faith. God wants us to learn to trust Him. We can't trust God if we are trusting ourselves. We often trust ourselves when life is easy.

Isaiah 45:2-3 *"I will go before you and make the rough places smooth;
I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars.*

3 *"I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden wealth of secret places,
So that you may know that it is I, The Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.*

God often leads us to the light by first taking us through darkness. A.W. Tozer writes that many of the greatest things God did were done in the darkness. In creation darkness covered the face of the deep. When the Eternal Son became flesh it began in Mary's womb. When Jesus died on the cross the earth was covered in darkness. When Jesus came out of the tomb it was very early in the morning. No one saw Him rise.

"It is as if God were saying, 'What I am is all that need matter to you, for there lie your hope and your peace. I will do what I will do, and it will all come to light at last, but how I do it is My secret. Trust Me, and be not afraid.'"

What do we do when faced with an uncertain future? Our first reaction is often to worry. I am not saying that every time we feel worried it is sin, no more than every time we feel angry it is a sin. Ephesians says, "Be angry and do not sin." Worry becomes sin when we dwell on it. We should let worry turn our minds immediately to God.

"I have never known more than fifteen minutes of anxiety or fear. When I feel fearful emotions overtaking me, I just close my eyes and thank God that He is still on the throne, reigning over everything, and I take comfort in His control over the affairs of my life." – John Wesley

3. We must walk with God

God must lead us when we are blinded by the darkness of an uncertain future. God leads us on paths that only He can see. If God is going to lead us then we must walk with Him.

It is not uncommon for college students to have no idea what they are going to do when they enter college. Students ask, "How do I pick a major?" I tell them they have to walk with God. Now I'm seeing more and more students that graduate from college and they still have no idea what they are going to do. They still have to walk with God.

God made us. God has a plan for us. God will see us through. I'm at the other end of life. I'm in the same boat as the college student. I have to walk with the Lord. I have to trust in Him and not my retirement account. I have to seek to bring glory to God – with all my life – until the end of my life.

Here is the deal: We never grow to the place where we don't need God. God's goal for us is not to bless us so much that we find security outside of Him. **Our future is uncertain, but our God is not uncertain.** We may look into the future and not see a way, but God will make a way.

God wants us to walk so closely with Him today that we do not worry about tomorrow. Joel Gregory said, "If you go to tomorrow to borrow worry for today, you're going to find the interest is astronomical."

Poet Robert Burns battled alcoholism and depression. He wrote a poem because he envied a mouse since the mouse did not worry about the future:

Oh, you wee, creeping timorous beastie,
Thou are blessed compared with me,
The present only touches thee.

I look back on prospects drear
And I look forward at only guess and fear.

God wants us to live one day at a time focused on Him:

Matthew 6:31-34 *Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' 32 For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

"With the goodness of God to desire our highest welfare, the wisdom of God to plan it, and the power of God to achieve it, what do we lack?" A.W. Tozer

John 10:27-29 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*

Psalms 112:6-7 *Surely the righteous will never be shaken; they will be remembered forever. 7 They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord.*