



October 15, 2021

A Time of Challenge for Many

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

It's been over a month since my last Friday evening letter. We had an uplifting, encouraging, and inspiring Feast at the CGM site in Orange Beach! However, the day after the Feast had ended, my wife and I began to feel absolutely exhausted and soon after both of us tested positive for the virus. We're on the mend, and each day I feel a little better, with energy levels obviously depleted. It will take a while to return to normal.

Over the last few months, my inbox has been inundated with prayer requests for multiple friends and brethren, some with serious illnesses in the hospital...some are home now ambulating, but many others continue to be challenged on a daily basis.

For those my wife and I serve both here in the U.S. and abroad, it has been a time of serious challenge for many.

We all also are now very much aware of the death of beloved friends over the last few months.

We're continually reminded and asked to pray for others with serious health problems. We have read of their struggles with life threatening problems and then received the news they have died and have come to the end of their lives and await the resurrection. It may seem that in spite of being anointed and having many prayers offered that many end up dying from their cancers, heart problems and other afflictions. We may have several thoughts and reactions.

We could ask, "Why didn't God heal them?" After all, they were anointed and many in the body of Christ were asked to pray for them. Did God forget them? Does God take notice of the struggles of His people? What about the promises in James chapter 5?

Of course we know that our God is a loving and caring God and fully aware of the events in our lives. We are told, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints." (Ps 116:15) Jesus spoke of His disciples having to face those who could "kill the body." He told them to fear God and then made a comparison. "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all

numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." (Mt 10:29-31) Our heavenly Father is very much aware of the "fall" and death and placing in the ground His precious called out ones.

Later in the chapter Jesus referred to the challenges and struggles of being His disciple. "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." (Mt 10:38-39) We will all eventually die if time goes on long enough until the end of the age. But if we have made an investment in preparing for the Kingdom and receiving eternal life, that is far more important than how long we may live in this life.

Jesus made a strong statement, "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." (John 12:25) It is a hyperbolic comparison similar to "hating father and mother" which meant *loving less by comparison*.

In the messages to the seven churches, Jesus mentioned the trials and persecutions faced by the "church in Smyrna." (Rev 2:8-9) He told them, "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Rev 2:10)

Hebrews 11 is called "the faith chapter" and reminds us of a number of men and women of faith who have preceded us in death and looked forward to receiving promises from God. But, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises." (Heb 11:13)

Some of these experienced painful tests of faith and horrible events that took their lives. But they remained faithful and endured to the end! The apostle Peter talks of that faith that is refined by fiery trials. "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1Pe 1:7) For some their "fiery trials" are health challenges or accidents that are life-threatening.

Jesus warns us of end time challenges and trying events in the Olivet prophecies. He admonishes those living then, "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved." (Matt 24:11-13)

God will allow these trying events to happen. But, He will use them to strengthen the faith and commitment of His true disciples. James tells us, "knowing that the testing of your faith

produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (James 1:3-4)

Let us pray for and share in the loss of those who have lost loved ones and try to encourage them, while rejoicing for the faithful endurance to the end of Gods' saints who have come to the end of their lives. As time marches on, there will be more, but remember there is a new world coming! He will return!

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

-Scott Hoefker

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