

Food for Thought

For the week of July 28, 2013

(Questions and Scriptures for further personal study)

1. Perspective means a lot when we find ourselves in a big or small test. How is Paul's perspective in 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 contrary to how most of us would normally think when facing challenges or trials?

What part of this Scripture is most encouraging to you?

What part is most challenging?

If you were facing a great difficulty or challenge, what would you want someone to do (or not do) in their attempt to comfort or help you?

2. Three of Daniel's friends were faced with the kind of situation that could easily have caused them to doubt God and his plan—they were told to either worship an idol or be thrown into a blazing furnace. What do you learn about faith in the midst of a test from their experience in Daniel 3:16-28?

What would you say to someone who wanted to develop the same kind of faith as these three guys?

3. When encountering a test or trial, sometimes we can think we have to just be positive to show we're remaining faithful. Psalm 77 shows how we can be real about what's going on and what we think in the midst of a tough situation and still remain faithful. After reading Psalm 77, jot down a few of your own thoughts and/or emotions about a tough season in your life or test you've encountered. Also, try to include anything you can think of that God has done for you.

What's challenging about being honest with God like in this Psalm?

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2 Corinthians 1:3-11

Praise to the God of All Comfort

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many. [NIV]

What part of this Scripture is most encouraging to you?

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If you were facing a great difficulty or challenge, what would you want someone to do (or not do) in their attempt to comfort or help you?

2. Three of Daniel's friends were faced with the kind of situation that could easily have caused them to doubt God and his plan—they were told to either worship an idol or be thrown into a blazing furnace. What do you learn about faith in the midst of a test from their experience in Daniel 3:16-28?

Daniel 3:16-28

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. 18

But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. 21 So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 22 The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?”

They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

25 He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”

26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, 27 and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. [NIV]

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Psalm 77

For the director of music. For Jeduthun. Of Asaph. A psalm.

- 1 I cried out to God for help;
I cried out to God to hear me.
- 2 When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;
at night I stretched out untiring hands,
and I would not be comforted.
- 3 I remembered you, God, and I groaned;
I meditated, and my spirit grew faint.
- 4 You kept my eyes from closing;

I was too troubled to speak.
5 I thought about the former days,
the years of long ago;
6 I remembered my songs in the night.
My heart meditated and my spirit asked:
7 "Will the Lord reject forever?
Will he never show his favor again?
8 Has his unfailing love vanished forever?
Has his promise failed for all time?
9 Has God forgotten to be merciful?
Has he in anger withheld his compassion?"
10 Then I thought, "To this I will appeal:
the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand.
11 I will remember the deeds of the Lord;
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.
12 I will consider all your works
and meditate on all your mighty deeds."
13 Your ways, God, are holy.
What god is as great as our God?
14 You are the God who performs miracles;
you display your power among the peoples.
15 With your mighty arm you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.
16 The waters saw you, God,
the waters saw you and writhed;
the very depths were convulsed.
17 The clouds poured down water,
the heavens resounded with thunder;
your arrows flashed back and forth.
18 Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind,
your lightning lit up the world;
the earth trembled and quaked.
19 Your path led through the sea,
your way through the mighty waters,
though your footprints were not seen.
20 You led your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron. [NIV]

What's challenging about being honest with God like in this Psalm?