

#91 “The Antidote to Quiet Desperation”

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If there is a two word phrase that can best summarize our culture, quiet desperation might be it (though I sense the desperation getting louder). There is a certain internal panic that people have that something is going to go terribly wrong and that there is going to be nothing that they can do to fix it. They distract themselves with celebrity news, sports, entertainment, politics, and so on, neglecting the spiritual void within themselves. Times of trial tend to move people to seek God, but such has been often temporary, sadly too often due to the church not being what it should be. Yet the quiet, internal desperation, worry, angst, and uncertainty prevail. I know as you do that even Christians can sometimes get to a point of quiet desperation. We are good at keeping secrets lest others think we are weak or "lacking faith" as if it is sin to feel anger, worry, fear, or panic. These things are normal human experiences. What defines whether they are sin or not is based upon how we handle them and what we do with the thoughts and emotions that flood us. Brothers and sisters, we are human, and we hurt and struggle. Some of us hide it better than others, and some of us have an easier journey than others. But for those who keep within themselves a quiet desperation, there is hope.

Let us start by rehearsing what we know from Scripture. First, we must remember that God will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Second, let us remember that God will never allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle by His grace (1 Corinthians 10:13). Third, let us remember that in this life we do have trouble, but Christ has overcome this world (John 16:33). Thus, we have the weight of the glory of eternity (2 Corinthians 4:17) to remember and to set our hope entirely upon (1 Peter 1:13). Yet just knowing these truths is not enough. We must believe them. Faith is believing the promises of God and acting upon them whether we feel like it or not. This is the challenge. The battle is for faith.

Never can we say that we cannot have victory because we can...by faith (Mark 9:23, Philippians 4:13). Never are we justified to say that we cannot have hope or joy (Philippians 4:4) because that is the right of the child of God...who believes. Never are we justified to stay in a state of internal desperation, though the external circumstances could be very desperate (as Paul said "perplexed but not despairing"- 2 Corinthians 4:8). We must believe that the Scripture is truth when it says "the steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace." Why and how does this happen? "Because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3). We must believe that statement, and then we must act upon it by setting our minds upon Christ. So faith is not passive, but it is active. This is why the Scripture says that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). Faith that is true faith leads to change, and faith is what is needed to break us out of a state of quiet desperation.

For those feeling internally desperate for whatever circumstances, we must choose to believe the Word of God and to trust Christ at His Word that He is able and faithful to give us peace. There is no other answer. This is not to say that there are not practical things to do as well. Faith is not "blind faith" which crawls under a rock waiting for God

to intervene. Granted, we can do nothing on our own power, but God is honored when we walk by faith by taking proactive steps of obedience. When circumstances close in around us, most certainly we should pray and trust, but let us not forget that the fruit of trust is faith, action, and obedience. We must not use the idea of waiting upon God as an excuse for laziness. There will be times where we must wait for God to move, but even the waiting phase can be a time of great energy in prayer, seeking counsel of others, taking small steps of obedience, and so on.

I know from my own walk with Christ that there are times when I just need to stop and pray because I am so overwhelmed that I can't even begin to take steps of action. I need to cast my cares upon Him because He cares for me. I ask Him for wisdom, trusting Him to give it as He promised He would. Then when my heart and mind are at peace, not because my circumstances are any less complex but because by grace through faith I believe that God is faithful, I start tackling the tasks before me of that day. Scripture says that each day has enough trouble of its own, so rather than worry about tomorrow and all that could go wrong, I must focus as God gives wisdom and strength upon what needs to be done this day. As each step of faith and action is taken, wisdom, strength, and direction is given for the next step. Many times in life we will be perplexed and overwhelmed, but we must not become desperate such that we demonstrate a lack of faith and retreat from walking by faith. Even as death closes in, we can have great joy, peace, and hope. Christians should not be known for their desperation but for their hope (1 Peter 3:15).

Desperation, though a common condition and a downright spiritual epidemic, is not to be normal, and it is not healthy. **Christians are not to be desperate people, for we are those who are to be built upon the solid Rock of Christ. Our lives are not built upon sinking sand; therefore, we are not those who are sinkable, unless we, like Peter, look to the waves rather than the One Who can talk to the waves and tell them what to do.** We can spiritually walk on water by faith, and it is the devil who is the only one who needs to be desperate. Scripture says his time is short to wreak havoc (Revelation 12:12), but we have eternity to live with Jesus. Desperation should not characterize our lives, but rather the peace which surpasses all understanding should guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7). He alone can keep us in perfect peace, but we must believe Him that He will do that for us. Then when Satan assails our faith, we must rest in our faithful God. God is bigger than the devil, and He is never desperate. He is our shelter (Psalm 61:4) and our shield (Psalm 18:30), and it is in His shadow (Psalm 91:1) in which we rest. **God's children don't need to be desperate because our Father never is.**