

Do Not Let Your Heart Be Troubled

Description

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An open letter to present truth believers
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“We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains...” (Romans 8:22). Oh Paul, how true are your words! Here we are, in 2020, with a global pandemic, an infodemic, crumbling economies, riots, a climate crisis, overall societal confusion, and all this, on top of the other problems we have day-to-day anyway. We all know what it’s like – being persecuted by the church, having friends and family distance themselves from us or treat us poorly. Being met with a general lack of interest in the message or an unwillingness to investigate it out of fear of being shunned. I could go on and on. There is certainly a lot to be troubled by. Yet, should we be troubled? If you think what you *should* do is determined by what is *understandable* to do, then I suppose we should be. But what is *understandable* is not always *justified*. What you *should* do is not simply determined by the past or by the present, it is also determined by how your thoughts and actions will impact the future. The truth is, being troubled by dwelling on all the bad things in life won’t do you or anyone else any good. Sure, recognize what is bad and don’t sugar-coat it. But view these bad things as problems needing to be solved rather than as omens of doom.

As followers of Branch, we have a mission in this world. We have a kingdom of truth and love to establish. The ways of Miss Misinformation need to be abandoned and brought to an utter end, and we need to establish the ways of Lady Learning. This is something we will fail to do if we allow ourselves to be troubled by all the unpleasant things of life. We have a solemn duty resting upon us to keep ourselves mentally, emotionally, and physically fit to do the work of Heaven. In short, we have to develop thick skin. In order to gain the real benefit from this letter, you need to apply this practically to your own life. Are you troubled by little things here and there, or even by what seem like big things? Do you let things ruin your day? However understandable it may have been to be troubled in any particular instance, you need to know that it is imperative that you rise up and shake yourself from the dust, never again to get flattened to the ground by circumstance or feeling. Every moment we waste in our troubles is a moment the kingdom is delayed. Set a rule – a firm determination, that you will keep your head above water, as it were.

The great thing is that even with all the reasons one may have to despair, in reality, we have even more reason to rejoice. The root of despair is short-sightedness. A knowledge of the truth gives birth to joy and peace.

“Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world.” – John 16:33

While it is true that the future is genuinely open, it is also true that the actions carried out in each moment cast into oblivion many possible futures while simultaneously creating many other possible futures. There are certain moments that, if they had happened differently, would have cut off the possibility of the rise of Hitler. And other moments were the decisive ones for whether Israel would have a king, or whether Alexander the Great would rule the world. Every moment has its bearing, but some moments are more impactful than others. Such was the life of Jesus: a few decades to decide the fate of the world. Be of good cheer, for He overcame the world! While the entire future has not been set, the ultimate failure of the plan of salvation is a possibility that has dropped from the table of possibility. The war has already been won; we must now just finish the battles. It has not yet been determined how many battles will need to be fought, but the more battles we fail, the more we bring upon ourselves. So, let's stop crying because of a rainy day. Oh how much trouble and sorrow we create for ourselves.

With knowledge of the war being already won, let's not be short-sighted thinking only of a lost battle. In fact, let's take joy in the fact that the more battles we win, the less we will need to win. So bring on the battles! And if your skin is not yet thick, then bring on the battles all the more. It will do you good.

“My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.” – James 1:2-4

Furthermore, our trials are really rather pathetic. As Paul said,

“So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure.” – 2 Corinthians 4:16-17

What were Paul's slight momentary afflictions? You know – being imprisoned, being flogged almost to death multiple times, receiving lashes, being beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, being adrift at sea, being constantly traveling, in danger from rivers, bandits, persecutors, false brethren, being subjected to hunger, thirst, nakedness, cold, sleepless nights, anxiety for the church, and so on (2 Cor. 11:23-28). And look at us! We truly are spoiled aren't we? – with our first-world problems. Seriously, we need to grow up, being men and women in Christ who can take a little hardship and a little disappointment. If Paul's troubles were only a slight momentary affliction, ours barely deserve to be called inconveniences. Once again, we need to thicken our skin so we can honor Christ and all he suffered through on our behalf. As He said according to the Apocryphon of James,

“Won't you stop loving the flesh and fearing suffering? Don't you know that you have not yet been abused, unjustly accused, locked up in prison, unlawfully condemned, crucified without reason, or buried in shame as I myself was by the evil one? Do you dare to spare the flesh? – You for whom the Spirit is a wall surrounding you? If you

consider how long the world has existed before you and how long it will exist after you, you will see that your life is but a day and your sufferings but a moment. {Don't expect good to be in this world.} Disdain death, then, and care about life. Remember my cross and my death, and you will live." – Apocryphon of James p. 5

Remember, we are not followers of Herod or Nero, or any luxuriant king! We are followers of the Galilean peasant who sacrificed all for others. Do we expect more than our master? What shame we bring to the gospel when we complain of our petty little trials – trials even the many who profess the gospel would not complain of. It is time we put on the armor of God and suffer with Christ to show some honor and gratitude for what he has done for us. And when we do so, let us say with Paul:

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed, always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. " – 2 Corinthians 4:8-10

I leave you with some sweet honey from the Odes:

"There is no hard way where there is a simple heart, nor barrier for upright thoughts, Nor whirlwind in the depth of the enlightened thought." – Ode 34:1-2

Troubles are like raging rivers; if you despise the Lord, you will fall headlong and be destroyed, but if you trust our Heavenly Family and follow in the footsteps of Christ, you will cross safely and not be disturbed. Read Ode 39.

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