

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of February 17, 2019

THEME: "Jesus on Trials"

THE QUESTION

Sunday Read Mark 15:25-34

"Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This is a question the Lord Jesus asked while hanging on the cross on Calvary's Hill. He had been betrayed after engaging in fervent prayer with His Father in heaven during which time He yielded to doing the will of God after asking about another way to accomplish what He had come to earth to do: that being to offer Himself a sacrifice for the sins of all humanity. Obviously, there was no other way, so things progressed through His arrest and mock trial at which time Pilate, despite finding Him faultless, ordered His crucifixion. Jesus had gone through the thirty plus years of His life on earth as a sinless human being. Never had He experienced the negative consequences of sin. He did not know what it was like to be out of fellowship with His Heavenly Father. He had been for all that time in complete fellowship with His Father; nothing had marred that special relationship. But now on the cross, He, for the first time, knew what it was like to experience a loss of that fellowship. He became sin, not His sin, but our sins. That is the truth so eloquently detailed in II Corinthians 5:21: *"For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."* When Jesus became a sinner, having taken upon Himself our sins, His fellowship with God was damaged! With our sin, He for the first time knew exactly what sin does to a person. His first sense as a sinner was that He was out of fellowship with God. And He did exactly what Adam did; He blamed God for abandoning Him. But it only seemed that way to Him because of the sins He took upon Himself. That is what my sin and your sin did for our Savior. How could anyone turn down His love? Why would it not be the desire of every human being to make total commitment to Jesus: in worship, in service, in total surrender to Him? O what a Savior!

EXPECTING TRIALS

Monday Read Acts 14:19-23

"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Jesus did not sugar coat the Christian life. He did not say that following Him would be a walk in the park through a bed of roses. Anyone that preaches a prosperity gospel is missing this important teaching of our Lord! He said there would be many trials. Now why would that be? It is because human race has gone against the law of God and fell prey to the deceptions of the enemy of God, Satan himself. Whereas Jesus is the Light of the world, the devil, as we read in Ephesians 6:12, is the leader of the *"rulers of the darkness of this world."* This is a spiritual darkness, a blindness to the truth of God. The minds of men, apart from the light of Holy Scriptures, are blinded to truth and are left wide open to falsehood, perhaps sounding good and believable, but dead wrong. So we have an enemy who has control over the people in the world who are living under false pretense. Those people will give God's people a hard time and cause much suffering, even to the point that many Christians have suffered martyrdom. Praise God we are living in a nation that was originally settled by people of "Light." But even they had to endure trials that a careful study of the Pilgrims will reveal. But they persisted, and God used them wonderfully well!

SPIRITUAL BATTLES

Tuesday Read II Timothy 2:1-5

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The truth is that God's earth and His people on earth - the nation of Israel and the Church, God's holy spiritual nation - are engaged in spiritual warfare against the devil and all his forces of evil, made up of demons in the spiritual world and unbelievers in humanity. All people on earth today are either in the army of Christ or the army of Satan. That is the reality that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 12:30: *"He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not scattereth abroad."* There is no such thing as being on the fence; there is no neutrality when it comes to eternal truth. If a person has not personally confessed Jesus as Savior and Lord, then that person is an enemy of God and a servant of the devil. That does not mean those people are evil people from a human viewpoint; many are very good from a temporal and human viewpoint. But a lot of those people have established manmade religion under the false pretense that adherence to manmade doctrine will get them into

heaven, which simply is not true. The devil is most dangerous when he operates as an angel of light by using what seem to be "good people" spreading false doctrine. In the end, Jesus wins, but there are battles to be fought!

EXPERIENCING TRIALS

Wednesday Read John 16:29–33

"These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." In this teaching, Jesus underlined the caution to His followers that there would be hard times, but He quickly followed up that warning with the proper attitude when the trials come: *"Be of good cheer."* Having been properly warned by our Savior of trials to come, we can respond with an attitude of victory because of that confidence our Savior instills in us that He has overcome the world. Our Lord has taken the best shots the enemy can possibly give and won; even death itself. I am quite sure that the devil gloated over the crucifixion, perhaps the greatest trial ever, only to find out that it paved the way for the greatest victory of all; the resurrection! Now that the devil lost that battle, he targets the followers of Christ. So when they come, we can be confident because we follow the One who won over all the *"fiery darts of the devil."*

ENDURING TRIALS

Thursday Read James 1:1-5

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect, wanting nothing." This is an amazing truth, but so very true! It seems like a paradox; rejoice in tribulation! How does that make any sense? Well, the truth is we are assured of victory, and we are given the strategy to win. I mean those teams that win championships have to come out on top in the tough path to become a winner. No champion team has ever had an easy road; always there were some really tough battles to be won. You don't score touchdowns without getting hit a few times, but when tackled, you get up and go at it again. By the way, in the Christian battles, we have a lot of teammates helping us out! We do not go at it alone. Praise God for our local churches! The truth is that after we win a battle, we are actually the better for it. We are probably more solid in our faith, more mature as a Christian because of the battles where we have come out victoriously. Yes, Christians can rejoice because of the guarantee of the victory promised by our Lord and Savior as we put our trust in Him!

WINNING OVER TRIALS

Friday Read Philippians 4:4-8

"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice...the Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." Here we have the key to capitalizing on things that bring us fear and anxiety to use them for our benefit. It begins with a heart of joy, not joy for that which caused us to worry, but because we have a Lord who will never leave us or forsake us. That is the promise of Hebrews 13:5, where we read this: *"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."* The trial may seem that way, just like it seemed that way to Jesus when He took our sins upon Himself; but the promise of God is sure. Whatever caused the anxiety did not cause God to forsake us, but rather gives Him the opportunity to show Himself strong on our behalf. But we must call upon Him with a heart of thanksgiving to have His peace amidst the storm. After praying, we must be sure to focus on those things that are praiseworthy rather than allow our thoughts to go back to the worry!

BENEFITS OF TRIALS

Saturday Read Romans 5:1-5

"We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience." Because we know that trials simply provide an opportunity for God to get a victory for His glory, we can focus on the benefits the trials bring. One of the benefits of winning battles that makes them worthwhile is that we develop patience that will serve us well and make us better handle the anxiety that may come

up in the future. That does not make battles any easier, but we can have an increasing confidence that God will make a way. He promised that in I Corinthians 10:13: "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, and will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*" Nothing is too hard for God; He promised us He would make a way for us to handle whatever. Having the assurance that we are on God's side means we can have a peace in the storm. Remember the disciples right there with Jesus when the storm came up. They panicked, but Jesus quieted the storm. He'll do the same for whatever storm hits us. The good thing is that winning battles make us stronger in our faith and increasingly prepared for those that are sure to come.