**A View to Eternity**

Life can be hard. Everyone experiences difficulties from time to time, some folks more than others. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies and there are people whose bad choices bring unimaginable suffering to themselves and to those close to them. But, frankly, some of life’s challenges just happen and we have to deal with them.

Some struggles are significant: the loss of a good job, financial ruin, a failed relationship, loss of one’s health, the loss of a loved one, peer cruelty just to name a few. There are folks who feel completely overwhelmed and fall into deep depression, turn to alcohol and drugs and other self-destructive behaviors. Some even consider suicide.

Barring some mental defect that would interfere with rational thought, our responses to life’s circumstances are, in large part, dependent upon our fundamental view of what life is all about. For any of these misfortunes to destroy a person’s life, they must consider their job, money, relationships and health to be the ultimate bases for their sense of well-being and contentment. The scary fact is that these factors are notoriously precarious and unreliable and unpredictable. People whose primary focus is on the temporal things of this life are vulnerable to the devastation of losing what they value most.

The person whose entire world-view is built on the foundation of the teaching of Scripture understands that, relatively speaking, this life is like a puff of smoke that is here for a moment and vanishes away (James 4:14). While he appreciates fulfilling work, material blessings and good health, the treasures he values most are those that he has laid up in heaven (Matthew 6:19-20). His relationships in this life are enhanced by the attitudes and conduct he has learned from his Lord Jesus Christ, but he values his relationship with Christ above all else (Matthew 10:37). No matter what happens in this life, this man’s fellowship with Jesus is something no one can take from him. He values the approval of his fellowman, but he craves God’s approval more; he considers small-minded cruel individuals of no consequence.

The apostle Paul suffered more greatly in this life than most of us can imagine. He was imprisoned, beaten, stoned and shipwrecked. He suffered hunger and exposure. (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). But Paul had a single-minded focus. “One thing I do…I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14). That constant focus on eternity allowed him to honestly say, “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). If I share Paul’s view of eternity, I can share in his strength through adversity as well.

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