

Beloved,

We are living in times of great challenges and many changes that we will all be facing in the future. An important question we must be asking now is, "How do we prepare for these challenges and changes?" I would like to share some thoughts about that preparation.

One foundational truth we must understand is that everything that happens to us, and indeed ultimately everything that happens in the world, is under the sovereignty of God. The Bible refers to God as Lord and KING because He is the *final authority* and always has the *last word*. Understanding the sovereignty of God can give us a great sense of comfort if we learn how to "*Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and not lean upon your own understanding, acknowledge Him in all your ways, then He will direct your paths.*" (Prov. 3:5-6)

Two things stand out for me in this verse: **trust** with your heart and **don't trust** your understanding. Because we often fail to *understand* the reasons *why* certain things happen or don't happen, we can fall into the spiritual trap of allowing our hearts to harden toward the Lord. Many have fallen prey to the devil's accusations about the character and love of God because they could not reconcile the goodness of a loving all powerful God and the pain, wickedness or evil that befell them or others. Their hearts harden, they stop trusting the Lord and turn away from loving Him.

God surely tests our hearts through our sufferings. But if we learn how to **process our pain** and offer God our lives in a deeper and more profound way precisely because of our suffering, we will find ourselves united with God in a way that is so utterly different than anything we have experienced before. Words will fail to describe it. Isaiah 40:31, teaches us that they who "*wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*" **The Hebrew word (kav'ah - קָוָה) translated as 'wait' is better translated as 'bind together.'** So the real sense of this verse is that those who are bound together with the Lord, united with Him, tied tightly to Him, or even 'twisted together' like the fringes on the Tallit (Jewish prayer shawl) will be renewed in their strength. What a wonderful word picture. Let your life be so joined to the Lord, so united to Him, that you will be able to mount up like an eagle and rise far above all of you earthly situations and receive new strength so you can walk through your circumstances and never become weary or discouraged. **You can keep trusting even when you don't understand. Amen and Amen!!**

The Bible says that Jesus Himself "*learned obedience through His suffering*" (Heb.5:8) and as a result of this process of "learning obedience," He overcame His suffering and "*received a name that is above every name.*" He is now the "*source of eternal salvation to those who obey Him,*" and eventually "*every knee will bow and declare that Messiah Jesus is Lord.*" (Phil. 2:11).

Just as Jesus was rewarded for His obedience, so the scripture promises us a reward. In Rev. 3:21, Jesus declares to us that if we overcome, as He overcame, then we "*will sit on His throne with Him, even as He sits on the throne with the Father.*" I do not think we can really fathom what this means. Paul writes in 1 Cor. 2:9, "*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him*" (NIV). **The reward for our obedience is beyond our ability to conceive.**

One of the ways that I have learned obedience is, as I have *died to myself* and surrendered more and more of my heart and my will to God, I have received an ever deepening relationship with Him. This process is really the heart of what is called **Discipleship** and it is highly prized by the Lord. **The reason it is so highly prized is because at the end of this process, you are a mature person who God can entrust with authority in His Kingdom and responsibility over His possessions.** Jesus made this very clear in His parables of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30, Luke 19:11-27), and also in His promise that the "overcomers" will sit on His throne with Him. Paul also referred to this in Romans 8:17 and 2 Tim. 2:12, where He spoke of the Lord's promise that those who are faithful and obedient will reign with Him.

With this in mind, we should look at each and every situation from a *kingdom/discipleship* perspective. We should ask ourselves this question: “**What is the lesson I am to learn through this?**” We should then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us what the Lord wants us to learn and how we should be reacting and responding. Then we can learn, change and grow as disciples whom the King can entrust with His possessions and His authority to rule and reign with Him.

Remember that learning obedience through suffering is a lifelong process, **so please be patient and forgiving toward yourself and others.**

As part of the process of *learning obedience* we have to learn how to *magnify the Lord*. In our *flesh* we tend to only see and talk about the negative and *magnify* those things. Listen to what people talk about and how they talk about those things. Their conversations *magnify* what they are thinking about and make it *bigger and bigger*. As a spiritual discipline we must *magnify the Lord* by talking about Him and His goodness and His mercy and His loving kindness. When you do this, you will discover that your inner life is strengthened, your faith is built up and you generally feel encouraged.

It is extremely important to have fellowship in the spirit and in the light with other believers. We truly need each other, but you must manage those relationships and those conversations. Do not let them go in directions that are not *in the spirit* or *in the light* and are therefore not *edifying* (i.e. they do not correct, instruct or encourage you). **You must take charge of what you hear and what you say.**

You must both *guard* and *garden* your heart by not letting people put *toxic* words into your ears. And if you do hear them, do not let those poisonous words get into your thoughts or influence your feelings. Do not allow *toxic* thoughts to be created in your own mind; cast them out! If you have not yet cast them out, do not let them take root. If they have already taken root, then pull them out like weeds.

One of the ways we do this is by “*casting down every vain imagination*” and “*making every thought obey Christ*” (2Cor.10:5, my paraphrase). Those vain imaginations are the pictures in your mind that create negative feelings in your soul and can even create negative effects in your body. Remember this, “*As a person thinks in their heart, so they will be.*” (Prov. 23:7) If you think good thoughts, you will have good feelings. If you think bad thoughts, you will have bad feelings. If you practice this, you will find that it works!

The Holy Spirit has been given to enable you to overcome everything you face. Trust Him to do that. Stay in worship, in the word and in prayer, and watch God work!!

The promise of God is sure, “He who has begun a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 1:6). He started His work in you, and He will bring it to completion.

Amen!

May you continue to grow in the love and deepen in your knowledge of God.

Howard and Janet Morgan

If you would like further teaching on these subjects, there are several CDs I recommend.

The albums CDA 232 – Your Pain and God’s Purposes and CDA 243 – Guard Your Heart.

Also two excellent single messages, CDS 20 – Praying From Your Place of Pain and CDS 34 – Pursuing Purity, Processing Pain and Possessing Power. You can read about them and order them on our website, HMMIn.com

