

So. Myf Jan 30. 82 P.M.

"THE TEST OF PROSPERITY"

Proverbs 24:10

Last Sunday we found God seeking a man. Samuel, the prophet, is to find a replacement for Saul. We can all learn a lesson from our friend, David, a shepherd, who was chosen. He met the test!

Solomon gives us a word on this - Proverbs 24:10, "If Thou faint in the day of adversity, Thy strength is small". If you faint, if you give up, if you quit, if you throw in the sponge when the going gets tough, it just proves that your strength was small, even though you did not think it was.

Adversity is a tough test on us. That little verse tells the story. Jeremiah 12:5 also gets the idea across. 12:5 - "If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses?" That is a reference to the buffetings of the time in which we live.

If you have run along-side the infantrymen, and gotten weary, what are you going to do when the Cavalry comes along? If you can't keep up in the open road, how are you going to make it in the thicket? If you can't handle the dry land, how would you do when you fight in the swamp?

There are all kinds of adversity -- there are the physical. Some of you are sick. Some have lost close loved ones. It is hard to bear.

Now if you faint when you are healthy, what are you going to do when your health is gone.

With so much talk These Days About inflation, Some things
Restaurant is so going to serve Misfortune Cookies!

There is financial adversity, financial reversal, loss of wealth. I talked
to a man the other day, he said when he went to work at age 16, he worked 12 hours
a day and was paid 8 1/2 cents per hour! His pay did not average one dollar per
day during the year.

Solomon says "Do not weary yourself to gain wealth - for wealth certainly
makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies toward the Heavens. You have set
your heart on getting rich, you have set your heart on a temporal goal. It will
leave -- just like that.

And people are not getting any younger. Do you notice that? People are
getting old, even I have a Birthday each year and it happens fast.

I read the other day a thought that could apply to the subject of growing
older.

"Everything hurts and what does not hurt, does not work. Your little black
book contains only names ending in MD. You finally reach the top of the ladder,
and you find it leaning against the wrong wall. You look forward to a dull
evening. You sit in a rocking chair and cannot get it going. Your knees buckle
and your belt will not. Your back goes out more than you do. The little gray-
haired lady you help across the street is your wife. You see a pretty girl go by,
and your pacemaker makes the garage door go up." Adversity is hard on a man.

Carlisle, the Scottish writer said, "Ah, adversity is hard on a man. Aye,
but for one who can handle prosperity, there are a hundred that can handle adversity."

There is a test a lot tougher than adversity. The battle is prosperity.

J. Oswald Sanders wrote, "Not everyone can carry a full cup. Sudden elevation frequently leads to pride and a fall."

Those who go through adversity you love and weep with them, but you get a little worried about those that suddenly get prosperous.

Because in the adverse days there is a basic goal in life, that is survival, you stick it out -- you start having prayer again, you come back to God.

Many great churches are dated in the days of depression. People go back to God when the bottom drops out.

But when it is prosperous, we tuck our thumbs under our suspenders and strut like a peacock.

For one who can handle prosperity there are 100 who can handle adversity.

Prosperity was the thing that developed Jonestown. They were not accountable to anybody.

I do not fear for you who are engaged in a time of adversity, but there is a word from God for those who are enjoying the backwash of prosperity.

Psalm 75:5 - There is a warning. It begins - "Do not lift up your horn on high, do not speak with insolent pride. For not from the east, nor from the

west, nor from the desert comes exaltation. But God is the judge; He puts down one, and exalts another."

Isn't it marvelous of our God to do that?

First, the warning says, guard against pride. You are being blessed of God. It seems like everything you are touching is working. God has blessed some of you materially.

Solomon wrote, "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger and not your own lips.

Do not drop names or hints, do not toot your own horn. Do not speak of pride.

Second, keep your perspective. Your promotion, your exaltation, did not just happen along like a breeze through the window.

It came from the sovereign hand of God, who looks down, judged things correctly, and said, "That person will become the object of my favor."

Paul wrote the Corinthians, "What do you have that you did not receive? Guard against pride, keep your prospective.

Charles Swindell, Fullerton, California - His phone rang late one night. On the other end was a good friend of his church. He was in his late thirties.

He had been part of a company that had been blessed by God with incredible growth. He was second in charge. His voice broke -- "I have tragic news, and I have a prayer request." What is it? He said, "I just had word that my boss, his wife, and two other members of the family were killed in an airplane crash while flying back from Northern California." And he said "I have just gotten official word that the company is mine." And I am suddenly a millionaire, he said, "would you please pray for me that I will be able to handle that promotion?"

Swindell said, my first thought was "My, what a great spot to be in." In the years that have passed I have been thankful that I have not been in his shoes. He has not lifted his horn on high. He has not lost his perspective. The results have been God's greater favor, the company keeps on growing.

This is what the Lord is saying here, referring to the test of prosperity.

It is not a test of survival -- it is a test of integrity.

We need to think about being a servant. Rather than a super-star. A Christian making money fast is just like a man in a cloud of dust; it will fill his eyes if he is not careful.

At this point, let me clear up something. I do not want to leave the wrong impression that having things is wrong.

When things have us, it is wrong. But enjoying the blessings of God is not in and of itself wrong. There are many, many people who are marked by the blessings

of God.

If you read Scripture, you find Job had much. Abraham had wealth. Joseph was lifted from the prison at the age of thirty and promoted suddenly to the place of prime minister. He had servants who walked in front of his chariot and said, "Bow the knee! Bow the knee! Joseph was suddenly the Prime Minister of the wealthiest land in history. He had much. So did Daniel. So did the woman in whose home the first church at Phillippi met. She was a seller of purple and had a home big enough to house the church family.

So if you have a twisted idea of prosperity, deal with it - come to terms with it. God's hand of favor has been upon special prosperous lives. Ministries in this church have expanded because of the generosity of prosperous people.

Psalm 78:70 - We all learn a lesson from David -- "God chose David His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from the care of the ewes with sucking lambs He brought him, to shepherd Jacob, his people, and Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands." Isn't that great?

Those verses of Scripture pour out like oil. It is the success story of a man who did not seek it. He did not necessarily want it.

Let's go back now and pick up the threads of our story.

Saul the first king had failed. He was tall, self-willed, conceited, disobedient Saul.

He was finally disqualified.

God dispatched Samuel the prophet to find a replacement.

I Samuel 16 - He came to the home of Jesse and his boys. Those boys parade in front of Samuel one by one. There is Eliab, and he was sure he had the job. But he did not. And Eliab's younger brother, and he did not. And on down the line; finally, he ran out of sons.

And Samuel said to Jesse "are these all your sons?"

And Jesse said, "No. Come to think of it, there is one more." How would you have liked to have been David? You are out in the field, and your Dad says, "Oh yeah, there is one more. The runt. He is with the woolies. He keeps the sheep."

So Samuel said to Jesse, "well bring him in." V. 11 - They were from the Southern part of Judah. "Go fetch him."

V. 12 - So they fetched him and brought him in, and David walked in front of Samuel.

David did not know what was coming off. He was walking along, coming into the house and V. 13 - The next thing he knew, he had oil running down the back of his neck. And there was talk of king, throne, and nation.

God reached down into the home of Jesse and found the youngest, and he said, "That is my man." And he chose David. That is the way it is, you see, when God is in it.

David was not politicizing for the throne. David probably did not even know they were looking for another King. He was just keeping sheep. That is why God chose him. He was faithful in the little things. He had the humility of a servant.

I Sam. 16:7 - God gave Samuel the basic principle. "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

God was saying, "I am looking for heart in this thing. I am looking for a man who has a heart like mine. Unlike Saul. I want to find a man whose heart is like my heart."

V. 11 - "Are these all Thy children?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and behold he is tending sheep." Who is throne material? God is looking for those who know how to care for sheep. He is looking for servants who are not interested in impressing people with their ability. David is tending the sheep, and Samuel said, "Bring him." And they brought him.

V. 13 - And Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him.

He was suddenly the King-elect. Think of that. What would you have done?

You would have gone to Sears and started trying on crowns. We are on the way. We are going to be there.

Do you know what David did?

V. 19 - "Saul sent messengers to Jesse." Saul was depressed. The bottom had dropped out of his life, and he was looking for somebody to encourage him.

He may have heard that David played a guitar or harp. Saul said, send him here, send me your son David who is with the flock.

Do you know what David did as soon as he was anointed King? He said, thanks Samuel. And he went out the back door, right back to the sheep.

Do you know why? Because he had the humility of a shepherd, of a servant.

He knew that if it was God's appointment for him to be King, God would get him on the throne. His job was to do the work of a shepherd, he was with the flock. He was keeping sheep.

I Samuel 17:20 - The Giant Goliath. Did David change after he fought the Giant? "David arose early in the morning - this is when he is given the job to kill the giant. He left his sup with a keeper, and took supplies that his Dad had sent with him.

If you read the whole chapter, he took the armor of Goliath, and put it in his tent. David went back to his sheep.

God chose David - Psa. 78:70. Because he was God's servant. He had a task to do and the task was keeping sheep. He did it well and God graciously, personally put his finger on David and said "you are my man". He stayed with sheep.

It took about 14 years in the process of becoming the King.

Our generation sees everything solved in a 60-minute program, mixed with 12 or 15 commercials.

Have we lost our ability to be faithful in the little things, year after year.

The number one concern is to find faithful people who will hang in there and stay with the sheep, year after year.

What did David do? Did he change when he came to the throne? He did have a smear on his record. Unfortunately, that is all the world seems to think of at the mention of David.

He was an imperfect man and showed lack of discipline on one occasion. But David came to the throne - he expanded the boundaries from six thousand to

sixty thousand square miles, established trade routes all around the land of Palestine.

The flag flew in pride over the nation of Israel because David was on the throne, because he shepherded them according to integrity. He guided them with skillful hands. The humility of a servant. The heart of a shepherd. Hands like this are needed today.

Columbus, Georgia -- Emil Garrett from an investment of \$250.00 paid a Chinese General for a rug while serving in the Marine Corps. Garrett took the rug to the Smithsonian Institute for appraisal. The director at the Smithsonian couldn't appraise it because there was only one other like it in the world, and it belonged to an Indian Potentate.

But records show that the rug once adorned a Chinese Palace. It hadn't been heard of since 1923, when the Palace was abandoned.

Garrett set an arbitrary price of \$150,000 on the rug. The rug is being stored in a bank. Inlaid with five to seven pounds of solid gold, the rug measures 7 1/2 by 9 feet.

Can you imagine a man with muddy boots walking upon that rug?

You will probably never be tested with the prosperity of a rug of gold -- but all are tested.

Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. I Cor. 4:2.

God had confidence in David, will you meet the test of prosperity?

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not -- fail in the test of prosperity."

Matt. 26:41.

"If Thou faint in the day of adversity, Thy strength is small." Prov. 24:10.