



Liberty Commentary June 9, 2008

These are uncertain times both economically and politically. It seems as though with every passing day the price of oil hits a new high. Unemployment edges up. The housing market is in crises. The banking industry is reeling from home foreclosures. The price of food is soaring and if that is not enough, we have experienced the ravages of violent storms.

It is important to keep life in perspective when we encounter these challenging and changing times. Political leaders come and go. The economy goes through cycles of prosperity and recession as it has in the past and will continue to do so in the future. The weather goes through cycles of drought and torrential rainfall and storms.

For those who put their trust in God, we have the assurance that no matter what the current political or economic tide, we are in the hand of God and he will not allow us to go without the necessities of life. David writes in Psalms 37, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread".

A good example of perseverance in challenging political and economic times would be the example of the life of the Apostle Paul. He endured all of the same hardships that we endure yet he kept life in perspective

and never became disillusioned by the circumstances. He kept his eyes on the goal of preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified and never wavered from the objective of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to the known world, no matter the current political or economic situation. With the exception of Jesus and Job, probably no other Christian suffered more persecution than Paul.

Paul was at first misunderstood and mistrusted by other believers in Jerusalem. He was plotted against and his ministry was constantly opposed by unbelievers. He was opposed by satanic influences. He was beaten and jailed in the city of Philippi and later in Rome. He endured four terrible storms at sea. Paul struggled against his sin nature and he was afflicted with a debilitating eye problem. Paul was subjected to back breaking labor as he made tents to support himself financially because from most of the churches and especially the church at Corinth, he would not even take any money because he did not want to be a financial burden to the church. On one occasion Paul was bitten by a poisonous serpent and he was illegally imprisoned and forsaken by all.

Paul understood tough economic times as he went to the churches in Macedonia to collect an offering for the church in Jerusalem that was struggling financially because of a famine and the loss of many of their personal possessions. Paul understood the wrath of nature as he bobbed in the raging sea clinging to the boards of a ship that had been destroyed by a violent storm.

Even though Paul endured hard times he never failed to keep life in perspective. Paul writes in II Corinthians chapter four, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed”. Paul writes in Romans chapter eight, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril,

or sword? Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us”.

For those who know Christ as their Savior, we are super conquerors irrespective of the ebb and flow of life's tide. Paul was able to keep life in perspective and not be overcome with depression and anxiety because he knew that God reigned supreme in his life and no matter what the crises, Paul was fully aware that the Christ in whom he had staked his life was guiding in the affairs of his life and ultimately God would be glorified and Paul and the Church would be edified.

Paul later found himself in a political climate that brought the death sentence by the Caesar Nero. In the year 68 A.D., Paul was martyred for his faith in Christ. From a human perspective one might say that Paul was not a conqueror at all. From a spiritual perspective however, we see a much different picture. Paul evangelized the known world in his day and established perhaps as many as one hundred churches. Two hundred and fifty years after the death of Paul the Roman emperor Constantine converts to Christianity and makes Christianity the preferred religion of the Roman Empire and the persecution of Christians ceases. Paul was inspired of God to write half the New Testament and millions have come to faith in Christ because of his inspired writings.

Yes, Paul endured hardships, but in the perspective of history and God's divine program and plan, Paul was a super conqueror. Most people today could tell you very little about Nero, but most everyone knows who the Apostle Paul was. God is still in the business of creating happy endings irrespective of the temporal political and economic environment. Just trust Him.

Pastor, Randy Mason
Liberty Baptist Church of Marshalltown
www.libertybaptistofmarsahlltown.com