

The Grapevine

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Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth. II Timothy 2:15

The Biblical Answer to Pressure

by Jack Northart

There are days in life that can try men's souls. The pressures of life can seem unbearable at times to a Christian believer. There are moments that appear to be overwhelming, and the tendency to quit can appear to be the logical solution.

The truth of this matter is that throughout history, anyone who has endeavored to stand for God and carry out his mission has had to endure mental, and sometimes physical pressure.

Elijah the prophet faced some mental pressure several times in his life. There is one such record in I Kings 19. Elijah had recently slain four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal at the brook Kishon, and Queen Jezebel had placed a death warrant on his life as a result. He felt that the pressure was too much, and headed out into the wilderness to make some decisions.

I Kings 19:4

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

This was how he was dealing with the pressure. He wanted to die. It must have been overwhelming pressure. So much that he was feeling sorry for himself and what "might" happen in the future, and figured the only way to stop the pressure was death. God had a different solution to his problem, and sent an angel to help him. At first, Elijah responded to God's solution by heading to the mountains to hide.

Verses 9-10

And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

Elijah was having a very difficult time keeping his mind focused on the real task at hand, which was walking with and living for the one true God. The pressures of life caused him to fear, and he kept running, and making excuses for his actions. Finally, he sits still long enough for God to tell him what He wants him to do. He shows Elijah what the future is really going to look like.

Verses 15-18

And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

Elijah had thought that he was the only one left in the world to do what God wanted done. Jezebel had threatened to have him killed, and so he concluded that life was over and he might as well give up and end it once and for all. Yet, God gave him a clear picture of what reality he should be focused on. As a result, he was once again a very useful individual. Until Elijah changed his focal point from himself to God, he felt bad and accomplished nothing. However, once he focused on what God needed him to do, his life completely changed.

The apostle Paul had a similar issue in dealing with pressure. Before he became a Christian, he mistreated the believers in the Church by having them arrested and some of them put to death. Once he was saved, God gave him a charge to live for Him and serve Him. In giving the account of what had happened to him on the road to Damascus, Paul tells of what the Lord said to him.

Acts 26:16

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.

That is a pretty clear message, yet because of circumstances that arose in his life, he tended take his eyes off of this command and try and deal with all of his pressures himself. Not to say that he didn't have a few pressures.

II Corinthians 11:24-28

Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

II Corinthians 12:7-9

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

As long as Paul focused on the problems rather than God's grace, he kept having the same problems and pressures. However, once he turned his eyes to God only, life changed for the better and God gave him more and more understanding.

Philippians 3:13-14

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

These pressures only serve as distractions from our true function in the Body of Christ. The biblical solution to pressure is to change our focal point from the problem to God.

Hebrews 12:2

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

I Peter 5:7

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

The great accuser, the Devil is on the hunt to defame, discredit, deceive and destroy. We are God's children, and as such Satan has no right to do this to us unless we allow him to. Our identity is not characterized by circumstances, but rather by what God has made us to be.

Romans 8:37

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.