

## Gaining Strength in Adversity

"Adversity = 6869. tsarah, tsaw-raw'; fem. of H6862; tightness (i.e. fig. trouble); trans. a female rival :-- adversary, adversity, affliction, anguish, distress, tribulation, trouble" (Strong's). "A condition marked by misfortune, calamity, or distress" (American College Dictionary).

Many things in life bring about distress. Maybe what someone says or what someone does or just maybe the circumstance within which we find ourselves. Adversity is a fact of life both physically and spiritually. Paul told Timothy, "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). So, by divine revelation we are told that times will be tough. But, what do we do when adversity strikes? We direct our attention to the godly of old: "Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord. Behold, we call them blessed that endured: ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful" (Jam. 5:10-11). And, we "consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin: and ye have forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons, My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, Nor faint when thou are reprov'd of him; For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:3-6). And, we have confidence that "our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

With this type of an attitude we can take encouragement in the word of God as it reveals the benefits of adversity: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing ... Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him" (Jam. 1:2-4, 12).

For the remainder of this writing, let us turn our attention to the prophets of old and some of the adversity they encountered.

Elijah: A prophet of prophets. His very attire (2 Kgs. 1:8) became the symbol of a prophet (Zech. 13:4) and Elijah represented all the prophets on the mount of Transfiguration, (Matt. 17:1-5). This man had his adversities. In 1 Kings 18:17, after "Ahab did yet more to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel" (16:33) and Elijah, by the word of God, said, "there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (17:1), Ahab charged Elijah, when he said, "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel". Elijah was a prophet of God, carrying out the commands of the Lord and gets charged with being the source of the trouble. Elijah rightly said to Ahab, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou ... " (18:18).

Jeremiah: "And it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that Jehovah had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priest and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die" (26:8). Throughout the writings of Jeremiah we stand face to face with his adversities. "Then the princes said unto the king, Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death; forasmuch as he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt" (38:4).

Paul: In Philippi, "and when they had brought them unto the magistrates, they said, These men, being Jews do exceedingly trouble our city, and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or to observe, being Romans" (Acts 16:20-21). In Thessalonica, "the Jews, being moved with jealousy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble, and gathering a crowd, set the city on an uproar ... These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received" (Acts 17:5,6,7). In Cæsarea, "Tertullus began to accuse him, saying ... we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: who moreover assayed to profane the temple" (Acts 24:2,5-6).

Time and again we see the truth, as was stated by Amos, "They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they adhor him that speaketh unrightly" (5:10). Yet, we ought not lose heart, because the Lord so testified that it will be so: "Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (Jn. 15:20).