

DON'T LET DIFFICULTIES SCARE YOU

"But we see Jesus." Hebrews 2:9.

This is an appropriate subject on which to speak in a church service. When we come to the Lord's house we should be able to get our minds refreshed and our hearts strengthened in ways that will help us to cope with the difficulties in our lives.

Difficulty is one of the inescapable facts of human existence. Yet, most people try not to show outwardly what goes on inwardly. For the most part we are reticent about letting trouble show on our faces, or about revealing how we suffer inwardly. But we know full well that so often there are difficulties, heartaches and troubles under the calm outward appearance of the human being.

There is no more persistent fact of human life than the existence of difficulty. There are difficulties in the lives of people everywhere. Perhaps there are as many varieties of difficulty as there are people. Every day of your life, if you will keep your eyes open, you will see human drama going on around you, which stems from difficulties. This world is filled with people who have difficulties and troubles. You are not going to be immune to difficulty. Everybody is subject to difficulty. If you have not had difficulties up to now, you may rest assured that you will have them.

Sometimes when difficulties come into our lives we become frightened. In our fright we immediately conclude that everything has gone to pieces. It is not at all surprising that we want to know what to do about our difficulties. This is a universal problem. We should thank our God that there is a solution to the problem of what to do with our difficulties. The best place to which we can go to find the solution to this problem is to the house of the Lord where His Word is proclaimed. It is the genius and glory of Christianity that it enables us to overcome difficulties and troubles.

Storms are a part of life. Therefore, we must learn to weather them. There is a lot of satisfaction in weathering storms. God does not want us to be weak men and women. Rather, He wants us to be strong. In order for us to become strong we must struggle with difficulties. Struggling with difficulties makes us strong and victorious. Strong Christians accept difficulties and problems as a challenge, and find great joy in overcoming their difficulties and solving their problems.

The trouble with so many people is that when they encounter difficulties they get bogged down in them. That is a real danger to all of us. We naturally resent the pain of difficulty; yet oftentimes, instead of buckling down and solving the difficulty, we just brood over it and continue to lacerate ourselves with it, not willing to let it go and be done with it. After one has done all that he can about a problem, if it is still unsolved, he just has to walk away from it.

In talking to you about how to handle difficulties, I want to remind you that a difficulty can break you or it can make you. It all depends on how you take hold of it and what you do with it. James Russell Lowell stated it well when he said, "Mishaps are like knives, that either serve

us or cut us, as we grasp them by the blade or the handle." Take hold of a knife by the blade and it will cut you; grasp it by the handle and you can use it to your advantage. The same thing is true with a difficulty. There is an old Russian proverb to this effect: "The hammer shatters glass but forges steel." If you are brittle, the difficulties of life, acting as hammers, will shatter you. But if you have good malleable stuff in you, the difficulties of life, acting as hammers, will forge it and increase your strength and influence. One purpose which God has in seeing to it that we have difficulties is that we may be made stronger than we would have been without them.

When God has a wonderful possibility for you, He doesn't just hand it to you, because that would make you soft and weak. He buries that possibility in the center of a big difficulty, and then He hands you the difficulty. Knowing this, you can thank God for the difficulty that He has given you because you know that He has buried within it a glorious possibility. Surround the difficulty with prayer, faith and dedication and you will find the potential good that is buried within the difficulty.

Sometimes difficulties come upon us for healthful and remedial purposes. I am confident that if you would review your life systematically and try to see it objectively, you would find that some of the greatest things that have ever happened to you have been your difficulties, for these have made you stronger and wiser, and have given more purpose and direction to your life. And sometimes a hard experience leaves you in an improved condition and situation.

It pays to be honest with yourself and consider whether or not you are the real cause of your difficulty. Nine times out of ten you will find that you are. Be honest and see what it is that you do that causes the difficulty or prevents a solution of it. Then take hold of it and handle it. If you have done something to bring difficulties on yourself, don't blame anybody else. Don't become resentful and bitter because of some unpleasant experience which you have brought upon yourself by your own folly. Don't chew a bitter pill, for chewing it will make it more bitter still. Swallow the bitter pill, forget it, and turn your attention to the opportunities which are yours.

The world has many people who go through life defeating themselves at every turn by telling themselves that they can't do this, or they can't do that. Some of them will even go so far as to tell you that they do not have what it takes. If one goes around telling himself that he cannot handle his difficulties, he will soon discover that he will not be able to handle them. There are people who have the audacity to tell you that you will not be able to make much of anything out of your life. Anybody who does anything constructive and worthwhile will receive discouraging remarks. When Thomas A. Edison was a boy his teachers told him he was too stupid to learn. Caruso's music teacher told him, "You can't sing. You have no voice at all." The director of the Imperial Opera in Vienna assured Madame Schumann-Heink that she would never be a singer and advised her to buy a sewing machine. Balzac was advised to choose any profession other than writing, as he certainly never would succeed at that. Don't be disheartened by any negative, critical, self-styled authority who knows little or nothing about what he or she is talking.

There isn't anyone who does not have within himself tremendous possibilities provided he conforms to the will of God for his life. Regardless of how young or how old you are, never let your difficulties scare you

or defeat you. If you have numerous difficulties, you may be sure that the Lord loves you. He knows that you have what it takes to fathom your difficulties and your problems and to come up with bright and shining good. True Christians can have great joy in overcoming difficulties and solving problems. So, take your difficulty, whatever it may be, and open it up and find the glorious thing that God has placed in the center of it for your greater life. Ask His help in finding the solution to your problem. He will guide you to the good which lies buried therein.

There isn't anything easy about the Christian life. But, by the same token, no child of God needs to be discouraged or defeated by difficulty. Faith in God and dependence on Him will enable the genuine Christian to meet valiantly whatever comes, to encounter it gallantly, and to overcome it victoriously. The big question is not what is going to happen to you, but what are you going to do about what does happen to you. For every problem in this world there is a solution. It is the task of each of us to find the right solution to our problems. If we will exercise a real faith in God, fill our minds with the strengthening words of the Holy Scriptures, act upon them, live with them, and be governed by them, there is not a difficulty that cannot be handled successfully. Christ said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

When we face difficulties, there is a tendency to consider everything as being dark or black. But behind every cloud there is a silver lining. Those of us who have traveled much by air know that when the plane gets high enough there is sunlight behind and above the clouds. When you get a mile or so high, you are then in an area of radiant glory. When a difficulty comes along, the thing to do is to look into it for the bright side. Sometimes a bad set-back or some trouble is the best thing that ever happened to you because it stops you from doing one thing and gets you to doing another which is more important or more needful. Frequently the Lord will shut a door through which you had wanted and expected to pass, and this distresses you greatly, but after a while you learn to thank the Lord that He shut one door in order to open a better door for you. There is always some good in every difficulty. Great people are those who can take a problem and shake it and get the good out of it.

Let us prayerfully and obediently use the minds that God has given us, and thereby outsmart our difficulties. There is always a strategy by which a difficulty can be handled. When difficulty comes, a child of God should not just get discouraged and give way under it, but pray and think and develop a strategy for overcoming it. The trouble with many of us is that we will not yield our lives to the Lord, and let Him control and direct them. We let ourselves be pushed around by circumstances and events. Children of God do not have to be pushed around by circumstances, but with the help of the Lord they can and should overcome them. When we have the Holy Spirit in our hearts and a consciousness of the presence of the Lord with us, we can then believe that every difficulty has some good in it. When you encounter a difficulty, say to yourself, "Let me extract from this all the know-how it contains."

When called upon to face difficulties, it is good to remember that Paul wrote: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). No matter what difficulties or problems you may

have, you can conquer them and, not only that, but be more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ Who loved you so much that He died on the cross for your salvation. Look behind the difficulties into the eternal and you will see that always the Great God is still there. Because of His presence, concern, and power, you have what you need to handle them. Paul wrote that Christ said: "My grace is sufficient for thee" (II Corinthians 12:9). Whatever happens to you, you can meet it triumphantly because His help is sufficient. His strength will offset and make up for your weakness. Therefore, don't let difficulties scare you. As a matter of fact, the greater the difficulties the greater will be the power that you will have with which to meet them. We have our difficulties, but by the grace of God we shall be equal to them. God ever sustains His children by His marvelous grace.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews recorded a great liability in life, but against it he declared a sufficient faith. He emphasized these words: "But we see Jesus" (Hebrews 2:9). He was not constructing a philosophy, but he was declaring an experience. With utmost confidence in the Lord, and what He would do, he simply underwrote everything that could come in the heroic challenge of the text: "But we see Jesus." Therefore, get your faith into focus and look unto Him. He will never fail you. As Paul once said: "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).