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Gratitude in the Storms of Life

1 Thessalonians 5:14-18

Jesus told us that we would have hardships (John 16:33), and He was right, wasn't He? As unpleasant as trials are, there's still reason for giving thanks. Let's explore two ways the believers can count on during adversity:

1. **Protection.** God doesn't keep believers from suffering or disappointment, but He does offer protection by staying with us in the struggle. Once we trust in Jesus, God's Spirit indwells us and will never leave. What's more, we have assurance that nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8:38-39). So our ever-present God walks with us through the hardships, providing guidance and speaking truth into the situation.
2. **Peace.** While difficulties cause many people anxiety, God's peace is available to His followers. This inner serenity doesn't depend on whether circumstances improve; it's a result of our relationship with Him. For this reason, we should be more concerned about relying on God than about fixing the problem.

As we recognize the Lord's provisions, we can genuinely express gratitude, which will fix our eyes on Him rather than our circumstances. We may not know what the purpose is for each trial, but we do know that our God is good and trustworthy.



On Hold with God

As a mother and daughter walked out of church one Sunday morning, the mother said, "That was a nice service. I really liked the soft piano music during the prayer."

The little girl turned and asked her mother, "That was a piano?"
The mother nodded, and the little girl said, "Oh, I thought God had put us on hold."

We need never fear that God will put us on hold. Our God reaches down and enters our trials and struggles with us. Our God is with us to the ends of the earth through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.



- 10/7 - Dennis Hester
Julia Sanders
- 10/10 - Mike Joyce
Susan Medley
- 10/12 - Shirley Myers
- 10/28 - Andrea Moore
- 10/30 - Collis Cornett

September Budget Report
(5 weeks)

Tithes/Offerings = \$7,015.00
Expenses = \$7,156.22

General Operating Balance as of 9/30/21
\$47,143.44

The Lord's Supper
Sunday
October 3rd

Perfect Navigation

Scripture Reading - Jeremiah 29:10-14

"I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord. "...plans to give you hope and a future." - Jeremiah 29:11

Although it is only October, the media are already talking about Christmas shopping. A few years ago, one of the hottest items was having a GPS navigation system. This gadget can tell and show a driver where his or her car is in relation to the destination and what is the best way to get there.

However, a lot of people still get lost, even with such a high-tech system. The reason is that they don't really follow the instructions. Even if the system is perfect, it cannot force the driver to go in a certain direction. Call it human pride or stubbornness - the end result is the same: loss of time and energy.

We are all created in the image of God, and God has a perfect plan for us. But we want to be in control, and we are too proud to follow instructions. The end result is a life full of chaos, frustration, and meaninglessness.

The Israelites learned this the hard way - they were taken into captivity and scattered among the nations. But the Lord remained with them, and he promised, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you...and will bring you back from captivity."

God will not force you to follow his plan. But do we see any better alternatives when we look at what is happening in our lives and all around us?

Three Barriers to Hearing God's Voice

James 1:21

What does God's voice and cell phones have in common? For both, you have to be positioned correctly to hear them clearly! Reception quality with your cell phone varies widely. In a big, sturdy building, your coverage may be spotty. In a wilderness area, you will likely have no cell service at all. You have to be in the right position to have a clear, reliable signal.

The same is true with your relationship with God. If you want to hear God's voice clearly and consistently, you must be positioned correctly.

What does it look like to be in the wrong position to hear God? When you're in the wrong position, your mind is closed - you want to do what you want, not what God wants. In the wrong position, your heart is hardened - you're unwilling to listen.

What keeps your heart hard and mind closed to God? Here are three barriers that keep you closed to God's message:

1. **Pride.** If you think you don't need God in your life and you want to handle things yourself, you're probably not listening for God to speak. Pride keeps you from being open to the possibility that God might want to say something to you.
2. **Fear.** Many people can't hear God because they're afraid to hear God speak. You might think that hearing God's voice or sensing his leading makes you some kind of religious fanatic. Or maybe you're afraid of the changes you'd need to make in your life if you listened to God's leading.
3. **Bitterness.** When you hold on to hurt, resentment, or a grudge, you're not able to hear God - because your heart is hardened. A hard heart grows cold and makes you defensive, even to God's love.

James 1:21 says, "**Get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.**"

It's time to get rid of the bitterness, fear and pride that keeps you from hearing God's voice and living out his purposes for your life. Then you'll be able to hear God with an open heart and mind and "humbly accept" what he's saying to you.

- How do you hear God's voice or sense his leading? In what ways has he spoken to you in the past?
- In what ways are you experiencing pride, fear, or bitterness today? What steps do you need to take to put those aside?
- Is there something God has been telling you that you've been ignoring? How will you respond to him today?

