

February 2009

“He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins...”

Ezra 9:9 NIV

The Mission of New Life: *being gifts of grace to reach, rebuild, and release life in others.*

Pressing into the Lord when life is pressing in upon you.

In 1986, America experienced the horrific accident of the Space Shuttle Challenger. Seventy-three seconds after launch, the epitome of American know-how, achievement and determination exploded killing the 7 astronauts on board. This accident not only destroyed the lives of these 7 brave souls, it also obliterated our crowning achievement and rocked our self-assured psyche to the core. One of the life lessons learned through this tragedy is that “we are not in control.” Our combined wisdom is not enough to have all the answers in order to make life accident and pain free.

My Point: We are not in control. Though this realization can leave us feeling more than a bit unsettled and vulnerable, it is God's ordained place of experiencing the power and the peace, the hope and the joy of Jesus being Lord over our lives.

Less than 10 years later, a bill was introduced to congress called N.A.F.T.A. (North American Free Trade Assoc.) As the news of this bill came to the forefront of public debate, the usual lines of opposition and support didn't readily appear. The Democrats and Republicans –the conservatives and the liberals, all seemed to be scratching their heads in wonder about the effects of passing this free trade agreement. The usual voices of opposition and support were strangely not that confident in extrapolating their position. It became apparent (at least to my feeble mind) that no one had any solid answer as to exactly what would happen if we passed this law. My point: we are not in control. Though this realization can leave us feeling more than a bit unsettled and vulnerable, it is God's ordained place of experiencing the power and the peace, the hope and the joy of Jesus being Lord over our lives.

Our current season of life seems to be screaming this same truth. From cover to cover, the Bible tells us stories of trying times and God's miraculous intervention. In the days of Elisha, economic hardship caused the people of God considerable grief and heart ache. Life seemed void of any reason to hope if you looked only through the natural eye. Hope for God's people is fixed firmly upon Him and His faithfulness to His eternal purposes. Poison stew was made edible for a group of starving prophets. Lepers were the first to feast on the spoils of an invading army that fled because of God's intervention, and a whole city was spared starvation. (2 Kings 4 & 7) The Apostle Paul knew pressure too. He was imprisoned, beaten, stoned, and shipwrecked. He faced constant danger and often went without food and sleep. What kept him going? What inspired his hope? He said it this way,

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

Phil 3:12-14 NIV

Paul was pressed by life’s circumstances and at times he said that he despaired life itself (2 Cor. 1:8), but Jesus had intervened in Paul’s life and “took hold of him.” Jesus “claimed Paul as His own.” He apprehended him so that Paul would experience the prize of life eternal. Because of Jesus’ action on His behalf, Paul had hope in God that ***“in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*** And that ***“he who began this good work in him will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Rom 8:28-29 / Phil 1:6)***

Dear New Life family, as this year unfolds before us with all the twists and turns of life on a fallen planet, let’s set our hope fully upon our Master and Savior Jesus Christ and His eternal purposes. He took hold of us so that we might know the eternal prize. This is what empowered Paul’s heart. As we do this too, we can know that our current difficulties will prove our faith in Him genuine –strong, resilient and undefeatable. Pressure (though difficult) becomes the fuel of a godly faith.

Pastor Dave