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Distracted but NOT DIVERTED

Be honest with ourselves and God if tonight will be effective in our lives. LOT'S OF SCRIPTURE (note; the simplicity of scripture) Understanding is NOT our problem. Note, some key words for our time together.

Distractions are a part of each and every day of our lives since the Garden of Eden. They come in varied forms from varied sources; pay bills, keep car going, keep house in order, teach our kids, keep momma happy, etc. If we are the men we are supposed to be, WE ARE BUSY. Most distractions are common/necessary and of little consequence, some good/not so good. BUT, a simple distraction can become much more dangerous than you think. If not handled properly, it can lead to a diversion and even result in a stronghold in our lives that satan can use to ruin our lives. 1 Peter 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Satan is NOT playing games.

If we are the men God intends for us to be, we must learn how to prevent our simple distractions from becoming serious diversions, preventing us from ever realizing God's best. IS IT POSSIBLE? ABSOLUTELY!! It is PROVEN IN GOD'S WORD!! BUT IT IS UP TO US!!

2 Cor. 4:8-10; We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; V10; (Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.) From God's perspective, our trials/distractions can even have a positive purpose.

This begs the question; As followers of Jesus Christ, what happens to our faith when we find ourselves in totally unexpected, desperate circumstances, our health is failing, or we're in a financial crisis, job loss, we're experiencing family problems, and we have no idea what the future holds? And then we pray as earnestly as we know how and yet there seems to be no answer, or not the answer we wanted, as if God were totally silent, or if God says 'NO'?

Let's look at some living biblical examples on both sides of this question. You may find yourself walking thru the pages of scripture. and ask yourself; How would you/I respond in their shoes??

- 1) Job experienced unbelievable trials, having no idea what was going on behind the scenes, lost everything, including his health, his wealth and his family. Job cried out to God in all of his misery, Job 6:2-3; "Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together, for now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea, therefore my words are swallowed up." and there seemed to be no answer. His response; Job 13:15; "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." His distraction did not divert him from his faith. What would you do?
- 2) Peter; Denied Jesus at a most critical time. He was distracted by fear of the mob, but repented, wept bitterly and died a martyr, refusing to allow his distraction to become a diversion, and the final word in his life.
- 3) Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, young men in the prime of life, facing death in the fire furnace unless they bowed allegiance to the golden image. Their CHOSEN response; Daniel 3:17-18; "If it be so, our

God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. BUT IF NOT, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Distracted by the threat of death, but not diverted from their faith, a time of critical decision and CHOICE.

4) Paul; 2 Cor. 11:23-28 (read) Note the last verse; "That which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Then he affirmed; "I die daily." & "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. Distracted by ALL these things, but NOT DIVERTED. He finished well.

5) Joseph; At 17 yrs of age, told his ½ brothers of a dream he had. Did nothing wrong, sold into slavery, ended up in Potiphar's house, seduced by Potiphar's wife, distracted by sex (a time of choice), he refused, did nothing wrong, falsely accused, ended up prison, forgotten in prison, and from there to the palace and the second highest position in the land. In all his trials, he REMAINED FAITHFUL rather than be diverted. Genesis 50:20: "But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

God's plan for Joseph's life was more important than a life of comfort for him. Also, God's timing is often NOT OUR TIMING. DISCOVERED TODAY as to what God was doing in the life of Joseph; Psalm 105:19 "Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, The Lord tested Joseph's character."

6) The best by far; JESUS; In the Garden of Gethsemane, just prior to the cross with unbelievable suffering on the shoulders of the only begotten Son of God who knew no sin, prayed this prayer; Luke 22:42; "Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from Me, NEVERTHELESS not my will, but thine be done." 'NEVERTHELESS' is the single most pivotal word in the Holy Bible. It was a time of CHOICE. It was the point when the distractions of great suffering did not result in diversion. His purpose was greater than His very life. It was when Jesus announced His priority, the will of the Father, and the will of the Father was YOU AND ME and our salvation. His faith cost Him His life because you and I were His priority. Is He our priority when things are difficult?

So, what did these (and many others, like missionaries tortured and killed every day, etc.) have in common? Neither their PRIORITIES, their FOCUS nor their TRUST changed, regardless of their circumstances. They walked 24/7 by FAITH and NOT BY SIGHT. They were DISTRACTED BUT NOT DIVERTED!!

So, what about my faith and your faith when life gets hard, when your faith goes through the fire, when you're in the dark? Will our faith survive? Faith is easy when things are going well. Remember, Jesus can find you in the dark, not because He has a light, but because HE IS THE LIGHT AND IN HIM THERE IS NO DARKNESS. Don't just talk to God about your circumstances, talk to your circumstances about your God.

Other biblical examples who allowed their distraction to become diversions and resulted in their downfall which came with a HIGH COST.

1) Eve; Distracted by what she wanted but knew she could not have (temptation.) James 1:14; "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." When tempted, she immediately began to rationalize, to submit to the flesh rather than the Spirit. As the result of their sin; Sin entered into a perfect world. Her failure is still affecting you/me.

- 2) Adam; Abdicated his responsibility as head of his house and, as a result, sin entered the world. He was distracted by the ease of going along with the world (Eve) rather than courageously being obedient to God.
- 3) Judas; Distracted by his love for money and refused to repent and it resulted in his suicide.

And now, a special category for those who have blown it and consider themselves FAILURES because of it and because of it, you've chosen to walk off the field of life. If that's you, satan has got you right where he wants you. Is there any hope??? ABSOLUTELY!!

DAVID, a man after God's own heart, chosen by God to be King of Israel as a young shepherd boy, killed Goliath, had the hand of God on his life as king, loved by his people, BUT, when he wasn't where he should have been, he saw something he should not have, but wanted and took it anyway. Committed murder to cover it up, had a child as the result of his sin. BUT, Nathan held him accountable. David confessed/repented of his sin to God (Psalms 51). But, God spoke through Nathan (read 2 Sam. 12:7-13). "You will not die and your sin is forgiven, but the sword will never leave your household." What followed wasn't pretty; incest, murder among his children.

After that, could anything good ever come from David's life following such a failure (or your failure) ? The baby died, but Bathsheba gave birth to a son by the name of Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, the author of Proverbs and Eccl. But, still greater, the person of Jesus Christ from the lineage of David. Was David's failure final? 1 Chron. 29:28 "And 'David' died in a good old age, full of days, riches and of honour". Does your FAILURE need be FINAL? Have you chosen to move to the sidelines due to your past failure? Phil. 3:13 "Forgetting those things which are behind."

These great biblical hero's did not happen by chance!!

THE ANSWER; There are 3 words that determined how these lives turned out, and ours also. 1) PRIORITY 2) FOCUS 3) TRUST 4) CHOICE

- 1) PRIORITY; pastor suggested a word for the year. Mine was/is 'PRIORITY.' If you and I are to live a life of 'priority' there must exist in us a very high level of mental, physical and spiritual SELF-DISCIPLINE. 1 Cor. 9:27 "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY!! A lack of self-discipline comes with a VERY HI COST!! PRIORITIES MUST BE CHOSEN AHEAD OF TIME!! Are you/I living our lives with a sense of priority 24/7? Matt. 6:33 "Seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God and His righteousness" NOTE; HIS PRIORITIES & NOT OURS. What is it that's pulling you away from God's priorities? Does your faith have a rival? Paul; Phil. 1:21; "For me to live is Christ, etc.
 - a) HOLINESS MUST BE A PRIORITY or all else is in vain. 1 Peter 1:16 "Because it is written, be ye holy for I am holy."
 - b) RECOGNITION/ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF WHO GOD IS; Psalms 46:10; "Be still and know that I AM GOD." THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A HIDDEN SIN. HE KNOWS. Life is NOT a big game and God is NOT playing games.
 - c) TIME, the single most valuable asset we possess MUST be a priority. "Too busy' is the enemy of godly priorities. How much of our 24/7 day is consumed by our faith; prayer, bible study,

- meditation, and private/corporate worship and just being ALONE with God? What distracts us from this priority; work, sleep, internet, cell phone, even church activities? What/who is it we love more than just being with HIM? JUST SAY NO!! "Keep the main thing the main thing." (JH) How do I use the time He gives me now? What am I going to do with the time I have remaining? Is it too late? What is the measure of your discipline of your TIME right now? On my phone: (The pandemic) "No movies, No concerts, no sporting events, no more restaurants, no social gatherings, limited workload, ; So now that I've cleared your schedule, Can we talk now?"
- d) PRAYER; 1 Peter 5:7; "Cast ALL your cares upon Him, for He cares for you." How do you respond in the dark: fear, panic, anger, depression or prayer? You cannot nor will you pray if you think you can handle it all by yourself. That is called PRIDE!! Psalms 46:1-2; "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Can those you love make it without your prayers? Can you meet all their needs without Gods help?
- e) STAY IN THE WORD; VERY CRITICAL Psalms 119:105; "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, etc." What do you do without light? Psalms 119:11 "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." 2 Timothy 3:16; "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Just how important is a MIRROR in your daily life? What would you look like without it? James 1:23-24: "For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."
- f) BE FAITHFUL; 1 Cor. 4:2; "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." FAITHFUL MEANS DO NOT QUIT WHEN IT GETS TOUGH! Winners are NOT people who never fail, but people who NEVER QUIT. Prov. 24:16; "For a just man falleth 7 times and riseth up again." Paul, 2 Tim. 4:7; "I have (fought) a good (fight) I have (finished) my course, I have kept the faith." (not by accident) Our circumstances and roles may change, but our charge/commission from God to be FAITHFUL WILL NEVER CHANGE, regardless of our circumstances. Is the depth of our faith measured by what it takes to make us give it up?
- g) FINISH WELL; Do you want to finish well? IT IS NOT AUTOMATIC!! How does it happen? Every moment of every day, every decision/choice; Phil. 1:6; "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."
- 2) FOCUS; Maintain your FOCUS; Isaiah 26:3 "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." Distraction can become the enemy of 'Focus.' Focus on God and His promises, NOT on your circumstances. REMEMBER; The battle for your life is really a battle for your MIND. This involves our CHOICE OF FOCUS. Proverbs 16:3 "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established."
- a) OTHERS; Our responsibility is learning to DIE TO SELF. We have a responsibility to others when their suffering and their faith is being challenged. Phil. 2:6; "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."
- b) REALIZE THERE IS VALUE IN HARD TIMES; (remember the CROSS) Romans 3:3-5; "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is

shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." 2 Cor. 12:9-10; "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. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

- 3) TRUST; Trust Him with ALL your heart, especially in the DARK; Prov. 3:5-6; A verse of direction, purpose and promise. Imagine a ship at sea, having lost all instruments, the importance of that ole 'Lighthouse." (printed) Our trust in Him is our HOPE.
In the midst of trying circumstances, do we REALLY believe the promises of God? Romans 4:20-21; (Abraham) He staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform."
 - a) RELY UPON HIS STRENGTH AND NOT YOUR OWN. Eph. 6:10; "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of HIS might."
 - b) REST; Don't keep struggling/trying harder; Matthew 11:28-30; "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and LEARN OF ME, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest for your souls."
- 4) CHOICE; UP TO US!!! SELF-EXPLANATORY

TEST TIME; EXAMINE OURSELVES;

- 1) How many distractions have become diversions in our 24/7 lives, things of little significance taking a significant amount of our time/attention. Remember how valuable TIME is in our lives.
- 2) Is there anything right now that has become more than a distraction and is causing you to compromise (not abandon) your faith?

WHAT'S THE ANSWER? Remember the prodigal son; "He came to himself" WE ARE INDIVIDUALLY RESPONSIBLE!!

THE ANSWER; REPENT!! 2 Cor. 7:10, REMEMBER, REAL REPENTANCE IS A 180 degree turn, NOT 360 degree!!