



Church of Christ

January 7, 2001

204 Dix Road Jefferson City, MO 65109

Heart to Heart...

They sat quietly looking down. You could see the sadness on their face. As they looked up, you could see the lostness in their eyes. Finally, they spoke softly, **I feel so empty inside. Every thing seems to cave in on me. What little life I have, my job takes it away. If that weren't enough, our finances are over-whelming. I find little joy in anything.**

Have you ever been in this position? Why are so many, those who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, so empty? There is an answer and it's real and true. The answer? Jesus and Him crucified. I know that sounds right and good but it's the truth. We allow things to affect us and take our eyes off of Christ. Our faith wavers and we focus on the hurts, disappointments and difficulties and allow those to influence our lives rather than Christ. The longer it continues, faith is lost little by little.

Read the book of Philippians. Paul wrote it from prison, facing a life and death situation. How could he rejoice? How could he be so thankful? His life and love centered around Christ! His circumstances did not effect or cancel God's intentions. All spiritual blessings are in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 1:3) They are ours in abundance despite our circumstances. Faith is what takes one beyond circumstances. Faith reaches out to God and Christ. **For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.** (Phil. 1:21) There was Paul's hope and life. His circumstances were not obstacles in his way but opportunities to share in the grace of God. (Phil. 1:12-18)

When we allow our circumstances to control our happiness and contentment, it robs us of God's life and faith. God did not save us for us to be overcome by our circumstances. Our tendency is to look at our problems and troubles and our spiritual eyes are clouded over. Christ and every spiritual blessing we possess take a back seat. What does that leave us with? The longer one wallows in their troubles, faith is being lost that might not be recovered.

When every thing appears to be caving in on you, especially things in which you have no control over, that's when we need to look for God's grace. Opportunities to grow abound at that time. (Phil. 1:12-13) Circumstances never stop what God's intentions are. They don't deflect every spiritual blessing. When circumstances are piled one on top of another, when people do things to you deliberately, do you complain and become depressed or reach for God's grace? (Phil. 1:15-17) Notice the direction of Paul's attention. (Phil. 1:18) Difficulties in life are to push us toward God's resources. (Phil. 1:19-20) Paul saw prayer and Christ Jesus as his hope. He was committed to exalting Christ, his Lord! Where did that take him? **To live is Christ!** (Phil. 1:21) To continue to live in this life on earth, with all the difficulties involved, Paul saw benefit to helping others. (Phil. 1:22) Sometimes we don't get the best situations in life and complain. It will rob you of life, joy and grace and you will end up with nothing but misery. The better for Paul was to die in Jesus but he didn't get the better. What did he do? Made progress anyway! (Phil. 1:24-26) Paul proclaimed to the brethren at Colossae that Christ is our life, not circumstances. (Col. 3:4) **I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.** (Gal. 2:20) There is the answer for our lives as well.

When crisis comes in our lives, which do you expect: Christ and the grace of God or dejection? What do you magnify: Christ, looking for opportunity to grow or your troubles? One is by faith, the other is not. **And without faith it is impossible to please Him...** (Heb. 11:6) Think about it!!!

Brent