

**GIVING
2010**

Sunday 30 May

1 Peter 4 v 12, 13

Dear friends do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, SO THAT YOU MAY BE OVERJOYED WHEN HIS GLORY IS REVEALED.

PERSPECTIVE ON THE CURRENT FINANCIAL CRISIS

As I look around me I see people in despair, confused, uncertain, mad at God, desperate, hopeless. What is happening to me, I am losing my life, I am falling apart, nothing seems certain anymore. Some are running frantically around trying to fix a boat with holes in and the water is filling the boat more rapidly than they can fix the holes. Some have just given up and are on the verge of giving this whole Christian faith thing the boot, "it is not working for me" they say. Men are looking for other business opportunities but nothing seems forthcoming. Wives are blaming husbands for letting the family slip into this dark pit. Others are flocking to the church just to find there is no quick fix and leave despondently. We have more questions than answers. Yes you know what I am talking about; I am referring to the financial situation.

What seem confusing is that on the one hand we have promises of God's provision for us and on the other hand we are faced with circumstances which reflect the exact opposite. Believe me God is not confused. God told Abraham that He would bless the nations through him, which means through his offspring Isaac. But the next moment he asks him to sacrifice the very son through which the promise would be fulfilled. Was God confused or was he doing something **in** Abraham that would be greater than the act he required **of** Abraham. Like David he would say: Psalm 20 v7 "some trust in horses and some in chariots, but **we** trust in the name of the Lord our God"

Share vision of the releasing of prisoners from police cells. Today God wants to release us from a lower purpose of living into a glorious, high purpose of living. I sense He wants to put the lights on so that we might recognize what He is busy doing, have proper perspective and joyfully allow Him to shape us for things to come.

To fully grasp what is happening we have to understand our sinful nature. Our sinful nature does not want to "seek God's glory" and find security in Him but wants to satisfy the need to feel safe and loved by the things that we can see, smell and touch. As soon as that security is threatened I put up a huge fight because it makes me feel exposed, unloved and insecure. As Christians we can even see what is happening to us as evil and

consequently use scripture and prayer in an effort to make God replace my seemingly lost security.

Demonstration. Pack out the chairs around you with the chairs acting as a protective wall that keeps us safe. Each chair represents a worldly security (money, possessions, family, career, sport, dreams etc).

To seek God's face is to seek **His** glory, not seek His presence to fulfill a need I have. Exodus 33 v18,20 Moses asked God to see His glory, but God replied "no one can see my face and live". Moses was humble and desperate enough to enquire of God what He was up to in order to align himself and the Israelites to whatever that was. He looked beyond his personal perceived needs because he was fully committed to let God have His way in order for His glory to be displayed. The Israelites on the other hand only wanted God to perform miracle after miracle so that their perceived needs were met. They were not concerned about what God wanted to do in them so that God's purposes for them could be achieved. Moses understood the seasons and God's intentions as well as His long range plan, in other words the deeper purpose of His actions, (for us it would mean why this financial thing is happening to me, what is God's plan in all of it) but the Israelites only understood His acts (miracles). **Abraham chose to obey and trust God more than his own understanding.** That is the FAITH we should display at a time like this.

THE PURPOSE OF ALL OF THIS FOR GOD'S CHILDREN

So then what is the purpose of all of this, why is God allowing this? I don't believe the financial collapse is caused by God but I do believe in Romans 8v28 ".....in all things God works for the good of those who love Him who have been called according to his purpose". He can bring glory to Himself through His children in **any** situation. When we are stripped of perceived security we feel deserted. See the close resemblance between the words "deserted" and "desert".

Jesus once was at a similar place where we find ourselves today. Jesus went to the desolate place, the desert, where He resisted the temptation of the enemy to disobey God's will and ways. Satan offered Him an alternative, an escape. He offered Him the splendor of the world, the very same thing we are afraid of losing. Is that not what we long for, are we not faced with the exact same temptation. Jesus, as a man, knew His Father not only as God, but also as Lord. He chose to obey. He chose to let God be Lord! When Jesus went into the place of testing, He was already filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1). When He **consecrated Himself to God**, choosing to ignore the temptation of the enemy and heed His Father's will and ways, He came forth in the **POWER** of the Holy Spirit. This is the crux and the purpose of the situation we find ourselves in. He had

crossed over into all that God had for Him during His time on earth, **empowered** to walk in the fullness of His calling and purpose (Luke 4:17-21).

This is the very purpose of what we are facing, if we heed to what our Father wants to establish in and through us we will be trusted with the power of God. This is an opportunity to let God show us the stuff in our hearts an life that hinders His power to flow to and through us and through repentance allow God to heal us. It might be different things to different people like father-son relationships, husband-wife relationships, restoring old friendships, being convicted of tithing, becoming more humble, receiving God's love, loving more, and establishing the right priorities like committing to a church. This is not just sin issues but also learning perseverance.

He wants us to achieve a GREATER PURPOSE for His glory. **That greater purpose is called REVIVAL** and the awesome thing is that he wants us to be part of it. He wants all of His children back from the grip of satan and He wants to do it through us. But while we are so content with false security we are settling for a lower purpose of living. Before we can be used as carriers of His power and glory, personal barriers that block His power from moving through us must be removed. This does not need to be a physical removal of something, but rather something that takes place in the heart. My experience is that circumstances help us to detect obstacles in our heart, it serves as a mirror.

We have to resolve that no amount of plans, money, intellect or talent will be able to bring about spiritual awakening in this world. Only the raw, pure presence of God's spirit can bring people to true repentance. **There is no substitute for revival** and I believe if we now obey God we are on the brink of it. He is waiting for our genuine obedience where the dragon of human nature has been met and beheaded "not my will but yours be done my Father". This is where we say "I am willing to surrender my ways to your ways; I am willing to put all my trust in you and not in ANYTHING else'. Jesus's miracles only started after His stint in the desert where He proved to His Father that He could be trusted with power and authority. He was hungry, thirsty, without shelter, alone, yet still chose to worship, pray and obey. He trusted His Father's ways more than His own circumstances; **He feared disobeying more than death!**

We try and do the right things like giving to the poor, almost as a bribe to postpone the much needed pouring out of ourselves on God as a living sacrifice. We have now come to that point where we have to do as Mary did. She broke a very expensive alabaster box filled with rich ointment on Jesus (it was worth a year's salary). Let us stop doing things for Him, but rather to Him, or rather let us get the priority right!

Let us praise Him for what we are going through and what He is doing in our lives, but if we doubt in our hearts what God is doing in our lives we cannot praise God. **1 Thes 5 v16-18**: Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in **all** circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

God's promises for never leaving us as well as looking after us is and will always be relevant, but like Matthew 6 v 25-33 states "seek first HIS KINGDOM and righteousness and all these things (our needs) will be given to you as well."

Are you willing to give not just your money, but your whole life in the hands of God and let Him transform you into a powerful vessel that carries His glory? I know you are!

PRACTICAL ADVICE

- Trust not in what you see, but trust that God has your best interest at heart
- Be joyful
- Focus on what God wants to do in your heart
- Love one another
- Do nothing out of fear but let faith determine your actions
- Get the focus off your circumstances by helping others in need
- Give to others, that helps to break the power of fear
- Be in unity with your wife
- Make no plans that are purely based on your circumstances
- Remember God's love for you!

Francois Marais