

Call to Obedience # 428
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Some Hints on Living Positive in a Negative World

by Reimar Schultze

Did you know that Jesus wants you to be positive? By this I mean He wants you to be a person of faith, not influenced by what is around you but by the Holy Spirit that is within you by virtue of His divine presence which you experienced when you were first born of Him.

In other words God does not want you to be a thermometer, only registering or reflecting what is going on around you, but to be more like a thermostat setting the temperature wherever you are. In other words, what should set every Christian aside from the world is a demonstration that he is like a celestial fire, ever burning brightly regardless of circumstances, whether he be in a lion's den or in a king's palace. In more practical terms, he will diffuse a little bit of heaven even when he is hated, ignored and cursed. He will do so even when his spouse is difficult and he is stripped of all earthly comforts. He is not like the unbeliever or the backslider who continues to seek his happiness by changing his circumstances, who keeps saying, "If only this and that will happen, then I will be satisfied." "If only my husband would be more loving..." "If only my wife would be more respectful..." "If only I would get a better job, a larger home or be delivered from this affliction, then I would be happy."

Again, the saint of God does not look for his happiness on earth through future improvements; he finds it in a present relationship with his Maker. He is a realist. He accepts the fact that every non-sanctified heart is bent towards evil, and that all men are imperfect. Therefore he does not expect much from humankind. He does not expect a perfect world on this side of eternity. And **he is fully aware that he does not deserve a perfect world until he has been proven victorious in this imperfect world** (Rev. 3:5). That is, only if he overcomes his difficult relationships, only if he walks through the rivers of afflictions and holds steady when he is tempted to strike, will he receive the crown of life.

Stop looking for happiness in the “if only” dreams. “If only I had a better job or salary, then I will be happy.” The Bible tells you to be content with your wages. Contentment is happiness, not more money. “If I only had a larger home.” Jesus had no place to lay His head and neither did the Apostle Paul, yet both of these homeless men with no fixed incomes changed the world for better more than any other two men in all of history. What is your focus, my friend? Do not be deceived. Let it be: *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain* (Phil. 1:21). You will get your mansion in God’s time and with every day you follow Jesus, it will become more beautiful. And it will be yours forever. It will surprise you. Again, none of us deserve to live in a perfect world. We must become worthy of it.

Do not put your roots anywhere except in Christ Jesus. If you do so, you will be happy in any environment and in any relationship. You will be equipped to overcome the difficulties, all difficulties. This is the mark of every man or woman who embraces the cross. Yes, you will suffer, but you will not suffer from your sufferings. You will gain from your sufferings.

Suffering, my friend, has sweet fruits. The more deeply you suffer, the more potential for your spiritual branches to spring upwards and the more intimate you become with Jesus. The more you suffer, the more earnest and effectual you will become in prayer, and the more treasures and riches you will find in the darkness surrounding you. A grape has to be crushed to produce sweet wine. **Happiness is not getting more earthly blessings and comforts, but it is getting more of God.**

Not only were Adam and Eve tested and tempted with the forbidden tree to see if they would be worthy of a perfect world and of everlasting fellowship with God, but everyone of us will also be tempted. However, outside of paradise we will not be tempted by one tree but by a forest of trees. The tests could come through our spouse’s conduct, or through our pastor, or by affliction, or by the lack of comfort and so forth. Yes: *...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God* (Acts 14:22). And let us not think of tribulation here as something big like being persecuted or stoned, my friend, as something dramatic that makes the newspapers. Many of us would succeed with that and be found faithful.

Where we fail the most is in the little battles, the little tribulations each day. Are you faithful there? It says: *...the little foxes, that spoil the vine...* (Song 2:15). This is significant and it means that the Self has to be crucified daily, moment by moment. Once you understand that and do it, you will find

happiness in every moment and the sweet aroma of Christ will permeate the atmosphere wherever you are regardless of circumstances. Once you are there, you are not put out by what is going on around you, but you will put up with it as one who is ever connected to the throne of the Almighty, ever drawing resources from there. **Positive persons are not made by favorable circumstances but by adapting a mindset** that includes these elements:

1. A consistent effort focusing on what you have instead of on what you do not have. For a point of reference, think about the Apostle Paul when he was imprisoned in Rome. Most likely all he had was the clothes on his back, the most primitive food, neither heating nor air conditioning. At one point he says that he was in chains (Eph. 6:20). From his imprisonment he wrote four letters to cheer up the Christians including the Philippians, to whom he said: *...I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content* (Phil. 4:11). Let me ask you: "Can you be happy with as little as he had when he wrote this?" From prison he also wrote: *Rejoice evermore* (1 Thes. 5:16).

The Apostle Paul also did not have a wife when he wrote this. You do not have to be married to be happy; you do not even have to have a good marriage to be happy. Therefore you do not have to walk out of your marriage relationship and get into another to find happiness. You can be happy now. You can be happy with your current job, with your current home and in the midst of your current affliction. Since Paul could do it, so can you. Had Paul not been content and rejoicing evermore in his trials and deprivations, the echoes of his voice would not continue to be heard today. So, how far will the echo of your voice reach? When you are negative and using your circumstances as excuses, you will soon be forgotten after your body gets cold. So focus on the things that you do have and not on the things you do not have, and rejoice.

2. Much time spent in solitude, in meditating on the Triune God. Your devotional life in this modern world can be easily drowned out by modern conveniences, newspapers, the radio, the TV, the telephone, the computer, Facebook, Twitter, and your children's many extracurricular activities which all drive you away from the throne of God. They steal away your time alone with your heavenly Father. Through this, your God becomes smaller and smaller until the world's activities diminish Him to nothing but a Name to whom you only give lip service. Of course if you become a prisoner of these gadgets and schedules, you will not be able to be a positive person in a negative world. The more time you spend with the electronics and the less with your God, the smaller God becomes and the problems of the world become greater. Only such

a person will foolishly ask, "Where is God?" when they get into trouble. The question is not where is God, but "Where have you been?"

In this world, saints of old and of today who move the arm of Almighty God stand out like Mt. Everest, Mt. McKinley and Mt. Blanc. They will not allow the devil to steal away their time of solitude with God each new day. It is these saints who are never entering into the presence of God because they never leave His presence. They are like Elijah who said to Ahab: *...As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word* (1 Kings 17:1). In order to be positive, you need to spend time alone with God.

3. Knowledge of who you are. Not only was Jesus a king, all of us who follow Him are Kings. When the Jews martyred Stephen, they killed a king; when they killed James, they killed a king; when they imprisoned Peter, they imprisoned a king. When men killed John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, and Savonarola, they killed kings. We may wear tattered garments and torn shoes, sleep in barns or in basements, but we are kings. But not only are we kings, we are also priests of God (Rev. 1:6). That is, we are intercessors and a bridge for the rejected, the despised, the broken and the alienated to the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is a bridge for them to God the Father. Note that Jesus loves you as a father loves his child, as a mother loves her baby. He is ever at the Christian's side, so my beloved brother and sister, get out of the present world of negativity, spread out your wings and fly, and remain ever in His presence. Be like a high altitude eagle: *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint* (Is. 40:31). The sky is waiting for you.

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