

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"Stoic Endurance" 1/24/24

*Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. (Isaiah 40:30)*

I quote the Stoics often, not because I know a lot about them, but because I like what I do know. People say so and so is a real stoic, look how they handled some bad news. This may be true, but it sounds more like they repressed their emotion, their anger or pain. Stoicism is about knowing how to react appropriately to our emotions, not to repress them. Stoics believe we have the freedom to choose what is right for us. We are to know ourselves, not cast blame first, not make excuses. It is learning what one can control and what is beyond our control – and how we react to it.

This makes me think of the Serenity Prayer. Serenity means peaceful. In this prayer we pray:

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting God will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
so I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
Forever in the next.
Amen.

How serene are we when we react to the things we bump into or the things which cause us to crash when difficulties are thrown at us as we wander through life?

David wrote, "The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want" and he didn't necessarily have an easy life. This is stoicism, it is acknowledging God and seeing He is in control. In Christ we live with a mixture of stoic endurance and perseverance. We endure the difficulties, the dark days, the discouragement because we have faith in God for the outcome. And God gives us the strength and peace to ride out the storm, knowing all will be well, God's kingdom will come on earth as in heaven.

God is forming us and sometimes it does feel like we are in the crucible and we are not sure we can take any more. The Stoic, Seneca, said to an acquaintance, "I judge you unfortunate because you have never lived through misfortune. You have passed through life without an opponent – no one can ever know what you are capable of, not even you."

Marcus Aurelius put it this way, "Just as nature takes every obstacle, every impediment, and works around it – so, too, a rational being can turn each setback into raw material and use it to achieve its goal."

God spoke through His prophet, Isaiah, saying, "When you pass through water, I will be with you; when you pass through rivers, they will not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire, you will not be scorched -the flame will not burn you. For I am *ADONAI*, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. (Isa 43:2-3)

It is said of those who rely on the Lord, who seek to live according to His teachings, "They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (Isa 40:31)

Please pray with me:

Adonai, give me the peace I need to let go of what is not under my control and the strength to be encouraged by the difficulties which are under my control. May the trials of life produce endurance and perseverance within me, so I am formed into the person You created me to be. Help me Lord, to soar.

Amen.