

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"We Can Persevere" 2/7/24

*My suffering was good for me,
because through it I learned Your statutes. (Ps 119:7)*

We all face difficulties, destruction, distrust, disasters, dumb stuff we can't handle, or don't think we can. We don't want to appear stupid or to be blindsided. We need to remember, if it is not under our control – we can't control it! The only thing we can control is how we react to it. Meanwhile, only those things which are under our control are our responsibility.

That is basically a message from Stoic and Roman Emperor, Marcus Aelius. St.

Matthew puts it this way, "Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (MT 6:34)

In Acts we read, "Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God," must be in church, we think. But reading on we see, "and the other prisoners were listening to them." (Acts 16:25) They were in prison. Cold, dank, dark, hungry, not how they'd expected the day to turn out, but they were praising God in the dark. Action and reaction. As they persevered, God set them free. Later they would witness to the power and love of God, and many would come to believe. Bloom where you're planted.

Paul told the Corinthians, "Our temporary minor problems are producing an eternal stockpile of glory for us which is beyond all comparison." (II Cor 4:17)

We can endure, strengthened by God. We can persevere, knowing God's will is being done. We can know without a shadow of a doubt God's in control and God is with us in this. I seem to be in a rut with my topics, but I'm not in control of what comes into my mind, or onto my computer, or to where my heart is drawn. Sometimes we just face a lot of difficult stuff in our life, one right after another. An unexpected diagnosis, a loss, we're blindsided by something someone has said about us or did to us. We honestly don't think we can handle one more thing. Everything is out of our control. But not out of God's control. God allowed this difficulty to draw us closer to Him; and, as uncomfortable and hurtful as it is, it is being used to form us into who God created us to be. Difficult stuff is like transportation, it can take us to a good place.

Marcus Aelius, lets us know from the many unexpected, hurtful, unfair, difficult things which he endured, "It's unfortunate this has happened. No. It's fortunate this has happened, and I've remained unharmed by it—not shattered by the present or frightened of the future. It could have happened to anyone. But not everyone could have remained unharmed by it. Why treat the one as a misfortune rather than the other as fortunate? Can you really call something a misfortune which doesn't violate human nature? Or do you think something that's not against nature's will, can violate it? Does what's happened keep you from acting with justice, generosity, self-control, sanity, prudence, honesty, humility, straightforwardness, and all the other qualities that allow a person's nature to fulfill itself? So, remember this principle when something threatens to cause you pain: the thing itself was no misfortune at all; to endure it and prevail is great good fortune."

I do feel like I'm repeating myself these past several weeks. Must be something I need to hear. Maybe we all need to be reminded. It is so easy to feel God has abandoned us when bad stuff happens, but this is especially when we need to have faith, turn to Him for strength and peace. These times in our lives we must realize God

is present with us, He feels our pain, He cares about our wellbeing. When we most feel forgotten, alone, unwanted, this is when God gathers us close, so close it blocks out all thoughts and fears, we can hear the beating of God's heart and feel the warmth of His arms wrapped around us. We know God is with us and things will come round right as God wills. Here we come to know God's laws and how to follow them, they will lead us to where we are to be. We are encouraged to persevere, and we do.

Please pray with me.

Present God, help us to turn to You when difficult stuff happens. Help us to take pride in our problems, focus on You and accept Your presence, knowing these difficulties will help us to persevere. We will be strengthened, we will come to know ourselves, we will come to know You better and all things will come together for Your glory.

Amen