

Lifelines

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Topic: *Believing in Tomorrow*

Believing in Tomorrow Transforms Today!

Life is filled with paradoxes. What is a paradox? For a waterman or boater, a paradox is a pair of docks. But seriously, a paradox is words or phrases which seem nonsensical, absurd, or impossible, yet is somehow true or valid. For a theologian, a paradox is when two seemingly opposing truths are both true at the same time.

Yesterday I read an insightful devotional in *Mornings with Henri J.M. Nouwen* entitled "The Paradox of Expectation." He stated that people "who believe in tomorrow can live a better life today". He also wrote that: "Those who expect joy to come out of sorrow, can discover the beginnings of a new life in the center of the old; that those who look forward to the returning Lord can discover Him in their midst." That statement in itself contains paradoxes; that our belief in a better future changes our present perspectives to create a better future; that those who expect joy to come out of sorrow find joy today and tomorrow; and that looking forward to a new world at our Lord's return, helps us experience the Lord in our seemingly mundane activities today.

Frankly, I have frequently experienced over my lifetime the validity that most bad, or sad, experiences today, make us stronger and more appreciative of the good experiences today, as well as giving us hope, strength and motivation to discover the good outcomes from our bad or sad current experiences.

As a child did you ever try to eat the cookie dough before the sugar was added to it? Of have you put a spoonful of flour in your mouth, expecting it to taste sweet and yummy like the finished cookie? There are a lot of ingredients that go into a cake or cookie which taste awful when eaten by themselves. But when all the ingredients are put into the batter in the correct proportions, and baked at the correct temperature and length of time, you can't stop eating the end product.

So it is with life. Many different experiences come into our lives, some by themselves are sweet, some are bitter; some experiences are heavy to carry while others are delicate and light. Some things alone are bitter, but when mixed with other things take on a sweetness and turn out to strengthen us. We can't stop the rain from falling, but we can purposely channel the runoff into constructive and safe channels.

Think of something that, at the time it happened, impacted your life in a seemingly catastrophic way, yet in the end turned into a blessing. Our attitude during the difficulty often makes the difference between it breaking us, or making us stronger. In John 16:16-22 before Jesus was going to die, He told His disciples that they wouldn't see Him for a little while and therefore they would be sorrowful, but then they would see Him again and their sorrow would change into joy, a joy that would not be taken from them. In John 16:22 (TPT) Jesus said to His disciples: "So will you also pass through a time of intense sorrow *when I am taken from you*, but you will see me again! And then your hearts will burst with joy, with no one being able to take it from you!"

When Jesus died in our place, for our sins, it seemed catastrophic! The Lord of Life, killed; the sinless One taking the darkness of mankind's sins upon Himself. The long-awaited Messiah, dead. But, on the third day, the Earth shook, Jesus arose from the dead, and the tomb was empty. He appeared to the disciples multiple times over many days, ate with them, and told them to wait in

Jerusalem for the arrival of His power via the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them. Because He lives, and would be in them, they would accomplish greater things than He had done.

The sorrow of the disciples was turned into joy; their fear to fearlessness, their weakness into His strength. What looked like the end of Christianity, was only the beginning, and the believers just keep on increasing all over the world day by day. Have you entered into a personal, living relationship with Jesus? Has He filled you with His power, transforming your life into a life filled with God's presence and purposes?

If so, your sorrows are turning into joys, your life today is being lived in ways to create a better tomorrow for us all. As Christians, you and I daily give people samplings of the joyful and purposeful life lived with Jesus, for the glory of God.

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