



DAY 1 ISAIAH 48:10, PROVERBS 17:3

1

I love museums, and YouTube has made it possible to visit museums around the world, virtually. I sometimes get sucked into a time warp when I watch; that's another lesson! But watching the manufacturing process of Italian jewelry is mesmerizing. The metal is heated, and impurities are skimmed off the silver or gold. Other metals can be added to create alloys that add strength and durability to the finished product. The jeweler knows what he's doing as he heats and stirs and skims the metals. God knows what He's doing, too, as He applies and allows difficulties into our lives. These fiery trials allow the impurities in our hearts to rise to the surface to be skimmed off by the Master, and the malleability of melted metal allows God to add discipline and trust to make us stronger. Day by day and year by year, God is creating beautiful, valuable gold in us.

DAY 2 JOB 1:20-22

2

Hollywood wants us to believe bad people get what's coming to them and nothing bad happens to good people. That's not real life, though, is it? People we love get cancer, die in car accidents, and have their homes foreclosed. We can't control these situations. We can, however, control our own reactions. Look at Job. He was a righteous man; he had done nothing to deserve what happened, and yet in a very short amount of time, he lost all his children and his wealth. He could have curled up in a ball or drowned his sorrows in alcohol. He could have screamed at the sky. But he didn't. He worshiped. If you read the end of Job, you'll see that his hardship turned around. Sometimes that happens, but more often it doesn't. How are you reacting to your hard situations? Are you screaming at the sky, or are you bowing to worship?

DAY 3 ACTS 16:20-25

3

When bad things happen, our first reaction tends to be to ask why. Why the bad diagnosis? Why did my spouse abandon us? Why did I lose my job? We want to know there is a purpose behind what we're experiencing. Paul and Silas could have asked similar questions. Why is God allowing us to be put in jail for doing His will? Seems backwards, doesn't it? They were sharing the Gospel; God should have rewarded them. But Paul and Silas didn't ask those questions. They worshiped God and trusted His sovereignty. As a result, other prisoners heard the truth of God's love. People who otherwise would not have heard about God did. God used a horrible situation to spread His love. What are you facing today? How can you reflect God's love to those who might not otherwise know God? Maybe that's the reason.

DAY JOB 36:15

4

Have you ever had your hearing checked? The doctor puts you into a little booth and puts tight earphones on your ears. From another room, he presses buttons; hopefully you hear the tone. He told me my hearing is fine, but the tones were still hard to hear! Sometimes hearing God can be like that. Sometimes life is so hectic we can't hear Him. The tones were hard enough to hear in the booth; I wouldn't have heard them at all outside of the booth. God is always speaking to our hearts, but sometimes He must separate us, take us to a place of stillness in the treatment room or the waiting room or the crying room. It is during the affliction that we can clearly hear Him. What He's saying is always the same: I'm here, and I love you more than you could ever know.

DAY PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

5

When we face affliction, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, frightened, and lonely. It's easy to be filled with doubts and questions. But Paul reminds us that it's possible to rejoice even in these hard circumstances. Not only rejoice, but pray, and have peace. This peace looks counterintuitive. How can you have peace when you get that diagnosis, or your child is addicted to drugs, or you can't have a child at all? I don't have an answer for you. As Paul points out, it's beyond our understanding. But I know this: the peace is not based on my ability to overcome. Nor is it based on my circumstances. It is based entirely on the character of God: the loving, kind, powerful, never-changing God who loves us more than we can ever imagine. If His love can conquer sin and death, His peace can cover me in my situation. Yours too.

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