

OUR NEED OF FAITH AT THIS HOUR

WEEK 7

October 18 – October 24

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

“And without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

Hebrews 11:6

BOOK READING

Roberts, pp. 48-53

Quotation for Meditation

“Where there is no confident assertion by the church of the truth of God there can be no firm faith in the people” (p. 51).

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 18	1 Ki 21	1 Thes 4	Dan 3	Ps 107
Oct 19	1 Ki 22	1 Thes 5	Dan 4	Ps 108, 109
Oct 20	2 Ki 1	2 Thes 1	Dan 5	Ps 110, 111
Oct 21	2 Ki 2	2 Thes 2	Dan 6	Ps 112, 113
Oct 22	2 Ki 3	2 Thes 3	Dan 7	Ps 114, 115
Oct 23	2 Ki 4	1 Tim 1	Dan 8	Ps 116
Oct 24	2 Ki 5	1 Tim 2	Dan 9	Ps 117, 118

PERSONAL REFLECTION

OUR ROLE IN AN UNSETTLED WORLD

EVAN DUKE

1 Corinthians 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

It was right in the middle of doctoral studies that the comfort of 1 Corinthians 3:5-7 came to me for the first time. As I was preparing to take my comprehensive exams, I heard the stories of people who had not passed or had failed multiple times thus ending their doctoral degree pursuits. As a result, a thought kept popping up in my mind: "What if I do not pass these tests? What then? Have I failed utterly?"

Finally, right before I took the first round of tests, the LORD brought 1 Corinthians 3:5-7 to my attention. I realized that the teaching here was very applicable to my situation. Just like Apollos and Paul had specific roles given to them by the LORD, I had a specific job to do. I shouldn't be worried about passing this test or any test, but instead, I should be focused on doing the job that the LORD had given me, specifically preparing for those tests. It was God that would give the increase (passing the exams) and nothing in my power. In my particular situation, I needed to do my job, and the results were up to God.

Fast forward a decade to 2020. Now we find ourselves in the middle of a global calamity with unrest and illness all around us. This situation in which we find ourselves would have seemed unthinkable even in February of this year. For me personally, two days stick out from the past four months. It feels that both of these days sum up the sense of hopelessness and anger that has settled not only onto our land but also the rest of the world.

April 30, 2020: The day of the inaugural South Carolina Orchestra Managers Meeting. At 3pm, I am seated in my office, taking part in a zoom conference call with both Presidents and Executive Director's from the Hilton Head Symphony, the Charleston Symphony, the South Carolina Philharmonic, and the Spartanburg Philharmonic. For an hour, we sat and discussed issues pertaining to the Economic Injury Disaster

Loan (EIDL) and Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), as well as brainstormed for any type of pathway forward. At the end of that meeting, all of us rather dejectedly thanked everyone for their time, despite being unable to come up with solutions for anything.

June 2, 2020: The League of American Orchestra's National Conference had gone online this year, and instead of meeting in Minneapolis for a week the beginning of June, it was now a 6 week online event with one 90 minute session each day and multiple Zoom Conference Calls the rest of the day. However, in response to the George Floyd protest's that gripped the nation, the League President announced that all League activities were cancelled for June 2, and that members were encouraged to join the protests. This did not sit well with the board of directors for Foothills Philharmonic. I had people contact me in response to the announcement that said since the League President failed to draw a distinction with the protests and riots that he should immediately step down. In their view, this type of behavior was reckless and contributed to the chaos.

As of today, I have many friends who have not had any work they can do since mid March because concerts nationwide have effectively been put on an indefinite hiatus. While my work with both Foothills Philharmonic and Ye Olde Piano Shoppe are secure, I know of many people in the performing arts as well as in other sectors of the economy who have either been laid off long term (the Nashville Symphony has laid off all musicians until July 31, 2021), or might be out of a job since their organization cannot stand the immense strain brought on by the pandemic.

In the eyes of an unbeliever living in this unsettled world, there is no hope. However, that is not the case through the lens of 1 Corinthians 3:5-7. Just like Paul and Apollos, we have a specific role that the LORD has given to us on this earth, and that is what we need to do, regardless of the pandemic. Even if we are unemployed because of the pandemic, God has something for us to do, something that only you can do and on one else.

For me, living out 1 Corinthians 3:5-7 in both of the above situations meant listening attentively, agreeing with what was correct, and responding in a Biblical manner (with the manager meeting, it meant keeping a proper attitude in the midst of terrible news, while with the League of American Orchestras, it meant trying to diffuse anger and keep the peace.) That is all I could do; I can't solve perceived social injustice or a pandemic that God has permitted to happen.

As with the early church, things could get challenging along the way, but that should not be our concern. After all, the Bible has made it clear to believers living in a fallen world: “ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world (John 16:33).” Will things get worse before they get better? That is quite likely. Will we possibly find ourselves facing persecution because we want to meet as believers in a world facing a public health crisis? Probably so. However, like Paul and Apollos in 1 Corinthians 3:5-7, we should focus on what we need to do at hand regardless of how dark and dire things seem to be, because it is God who gives the increase.