

THE BIG IDEA: If we see every problem as persecution, we'll have real problems with real persecution.

The Take-Off

A couple weeks ago I shared with you about the word "through"

God hasn't really taken me away from that just yet, and so this morning is going to follow some of that theme

Turn to **Exodus 13:17-18** and let me share for a few minutes what the Lord showed me this week from these 2 verses

I've got 3 takeaways from this passage, but let me give you the Big Idea first: **If we see every problem as persecution, we'll have real problems with real persecution.**

I get that we often think we're being persecuted when we face problems, but that's based more on feelings.

They can feel similar but with different purposes.

But if we confuse the 2, we won't be ready for real persecution.

This week I read The Hiding Place - the classic book by Corrie ten Boom about how she survived the holocaust

It reminded me that what we're facing now is a problem, but not the persecution she faced

Some would say that persecution is coming, and I would say that we'd better figure out how to respond to the problems so that we'll be ready for it.

1 Corinthians 10:11 tells us that everything in the OT is there to teach us - so let's learn from the Israelites

1. It's not enough to look the part; we've got to be ready to play the part

- a. At first glance, vv. 17-18 seem to say 2 different things: v. 17 says they weren't ready for battle and v. 18 says that left ready for battle
- b. It had me scratching my head until I dug a little deeper and found that most commentators say that v. 18 means that the left Egypt in military formation
- c. That's when I noticed the words "like an army for battle"
- d. They looked like an army but they weren't one
- e. **It's not enough to look the part; we've got to be ready to play the part**
- f. So God took them on a 40 year journey that should have taken a lot less time
- g. Why? Because they weren't ready.
- h. We don't want to have a form of godliness with no power.
- i. We don't want to wear armor and yet not know how to use it.
- j. I could look like a doctor, but without the training, you wouldn't want me operating on you.

2. Problems aren't persecution; problems are training

- a. God has us in training.
- b. Psalms 144:1 says he trains our hands for war
- c. **Problems aren't persecution; problems are training**
- d. If we see them as persecution, we'll always look for how we can get out of them
- e. If we see them as training, we'll always look for what we can get out of them
- f. How does God train us?
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 / the Word
 - Prov. 22:6 / Parents
 - Prov. 27:17 / Other people
 - Titus 2 / Older men and women
 - Hebrews 5:8 / Suffering (true for Jesus, definitely true for us!)
- g. Let's just agree on the obvious: no one really enjoys the training because it hurts!
- h. **We try to protect ourselves from pain and God tries to prepare us through pain**

3. Learn to see past what you can see

- a. If we're going to thrive in training, then we're going to need this key: **learn to see past what you can see**
- b. 2 Cor. 4:17-18 / Paul looked past what he could see
- c. 2 Cor. 4:8 reveals what that allowed him to do: be pressed but not crushed
- d. We've got to learn how to be pressed and perplexed without being crushed and in despair

- e. What are you looking at? Focused on?
- f. If we only see the problems, we'll never see the purpose.
- g. God has assignments for each of us, and he prepares us so that he can promote us
- h. So learn to look past what you can see - learn to see the unseen reality

The Landing

Remember that what happened to the Israelites happened as an example for us

I think sometimes we buy the lie that if we believe in Jesus, we're ready for everything

But Romans 12:1-2 reminds us that there is a process - we are being transformed into his image

God still takes his people in roundabout ways when they need to be prepared

He still uses problems to train us because there are battles that he needs us to fight

He's getting us ready - don't cut the training short

Let's pray