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Casting

by Warren Berkley

When my sons were little boys, we would be working on some project, assembling something or fixing something and, to the best of my ability, I would oversee and advise. I would instruct them, get the necessary materials or tools, but let them do the work. Sometimes, their level of frustration came to a point where they just turned it over to me and watched. I would take over, but when complete, I was careful to show my pleasure with their participation.

It was very similar to the Biblical concept of “casting.” You take something you cannot fix or handle and you turn it over to God. You do all you are able to do. And, you stay involved in doing what is right. But you come to a place of such pressure and anxiety, you must hand it over to God: Casting.

There are three things you can do with anxiety:

1. You can hold it in: internalize it, let it make you miserable and irritable, get up with it every day.
2. You can unload your stress on others: complaining, venting, expressing your bitterness to others who may only be receivers of your stress, but not the cause.
3. You can give it to God.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee; He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. (Psa 55:22)

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time, He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. (1 Pet 5:6-7)

Our Music and Our Morals

by Mark White

We all have our favorite music. In a crowd of people, there are headphones, ear buds, or air pods with music playing through them in those ears. Nearly every nice restaurant has music in the background. Music is comforting, soothing, invigorating, inspiring and influential. Someone once said, “Let me write a nation’s songs and I care not who writes its laws.” The person who said that knew something about the power of music to influence people’s thoughts and behaviors.

We all have our favorite music artist or group. Because music is so powerful, we must be careful what we allow into our minds and hearts. Songs about drugs, alcohol, violence, and sexual immorality can lower our resistance to temptation in these areas. “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life”, said Solomon in Proverbs 4:23. Some singing groups and artists have evil purpose in their musical lyrics. They want to change the way people think and feel about some things God does not approve. Today, we always have music videos we can watch, too. Some of these music artists dress, behave, and perform in ways which should embarrass them and also make us ashamed to even see them, much less hear their music. Do you ever find yourself excusing some immoral lyrics in a song just because it has a catchy melody? Those nasty words and thoughts can sneak into our hearts on the notes of a favorite tune! Satan is sneaky that way. He uses every available means to get his message into our minds. Jesus wants us to be pure in heart (Matt. 5:8). Be willing to change your music if it’s causing trouble for you.

Comfort for the Depressed

Johnny Felker

In II Corinthians 1, Paul discusses what must have been one of the lowest points in his life, a time filled with deep feelings of anxiety and despair. He reports that in Asia he was "*burdened excessively, beyond... strength*" so that he "*despaired even of life*", having the "*sentence of death*" within himself (II Corinthians 1:8-9). He spoke of how he had "no rest" for his spirit, how he was "*afflicted on every side*", "*conflicts without, fears within*" (II Corinthians 7:5). Have you ever felt this way? Have you known this kind of pressure? As Paul reflected upon his sufferings he made several observations that will help each of us when we go through similar times of suffering.

Suffering causes us to trust in God rather than ourselves. "*For indeed we have the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead*" (II Corinthians 1:9). How powerfully suffering reminds us of our human weakness! Our inability to remove suffering points to the need to trust in God. How hard it is for us to learn that lesson! Often we have to be put flat of our back before we start looking up!

Suffering prompts us to pray. Paul had learned what a great help prayer was in suffering. He reminded the Corinthians that deliverance from his afflictions could be found through their prayers (II Corinthians 1:11). In chapter 12, when he spoke of his thorn in the flesh he mentions how he prayed repeatedly to the Lord. And so we are encouraged to do: "*Is any among you suffering? Let him pray!*" (James 5:13).

God has the power to deliver us from suffering. In contrast to man's weakness Paul describes God as one who can "*raise the dead*" (II Corinthians 1:9). He who can raise one from death can also deliver one from it. In this assurance Paul affirmed that God had not only delivered him in the past but would do so in the future in keeping with his will (II Corinthians 1:10-11)!

God has the power to strengthen us while suffering! Not all God's comfort comes through the removal of that which makes us suffer. When Paul prayed for relief from his "thorn" (II Corinthians 12) God said, "*My grace is sufficient for you*" (II Corinthians 12:9). To know that we are Christians, that we have the hope of heaven, that we live in his favor provides sufficient strength to endure for Christ's sake whatever may be our lot in life. "*For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison...*" (II Corinthians 4:17).

Our sufferings make it possible for us to comfort others in their afflictions. Paul hoped to comfort others in their afflictions just God had comforted him (II Corinthians 1:4). What a great attitude he had! Rather than complain about his problems, he rejoiced that they provided him with the power and compassion to help others who faced similar circumstances. Who can be a better comforter to the suffering than the one who has experienced suffering and overcame it?

From the day Paul rose from baptism to serve Christ (Acts 9:18; 22:16), he learned as Jesus had foretold "*how many things he must suffer for my name's sake*." And yet in them all, Paul kept the faith. Throughout his life, he demonstrated unswerving commitment to Christ and patient hope of living with him someday. All of us can have that same hope -- that whatever life may bring, God will be there to help us remain faithful and to deliver us to world where pain does not exist. Be comforted by this promise.