

Living From The Inside Out

2 Corinthians 11:24-28

I. INTRODUCTION-

- a. Over the years... different scales have been used to help people measure the stress they are under.
- b. One of these is called the Social Readjustment Rating Scale ... compiled by a man named Dr. Thomas Holmes.
- c. This scale assigns points to various life events... then adding together the points that apply to you at any given time... you get an idea of the amount... and the kind of stress... that you are under.
- d. For instance the death of a spouse is number one on the list with 100 points ... going to jail is number 4 on the list with 63 points... personal injury or illness is number 6 on the list with 53 points... being fired from a job is number 8 on the list with 47 points... retirement is number 10 on the stress list with 45 points... change in the health of a family member is number 11 with 44 points... financial trouble is number 16 on the list with 38 points... changing jobs is 18 on the list with 36 points... a vacation is number 41 on the list with 13 points... Christmas is number 42 on the list with 12 points.
- e. According to this scale... when a person reaches 200 points... they are in trouble.
- f. And if those 200 points are accumulated in a relatively short period of time... that person is probably on the verge of a heart attack...or some other sort of breakdown.

II. CHRISTIANS AND STRESS-

- a. Christians are not immune from stress in life... the value of the Christian life is... whatever stress believers face will be in this world and in this life only.

- b. Believers in Christ are headed to an eternal home where there will be no more pain... no more troubles... no more troubles... and no more stress... that is not true for unbelievers.
- c. Contrary to believers...whatever stress an unbeliever faces in this life ... is nothing compared to the stress they will face in an eternity separated from God.
- d. Another value of the Christian life... is that God has made available to Christians resources to help us deal with stress in this life.
- e. God's stress plan for believers is for us to live from the inside out ... for us to grow so strong on the inside...so strong in our spirit... so strong in our walk with the Lord... that when troubles and trials occur on the outside of our life... we are not shaken... devastated... or destroyed.
- f. Christians cannot control what sort of trouble knocks at our door... but using the resources God gives to us... we can be ready when trouble comes... and we can control how we respond when the storms of life come upon us.
- g. I wonder how many points the apostle Paul might have accumulated ...on Dr. Holmes' stress chart.
- h. From 2 Corinthians 11:24-28...listen again at what Paul experienced.
- i. *"From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness- besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches"*

- j. I am sure... that Paul would have sailed right off the stress chart.
- k. But in all that he faced... Paul did not come unglued... he faced the pressures of life...and took everything in stride.
- l. Yes... Paul died in the ministry...but he did not die from a heart attack... or some stress-induced disease.
- m. Paul died as a martyr for the cause of Christ... and His Gospel.
- n. And even facing death that did not produce undue stress in Paul's life... shortly before his death... Paul wrote this to his young protégé, Timothy.
- o. *2 Timothy 4:7-8 "... I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."*
- p. Those are not the words of a man who is a panic about what is happening in his life... those are not the words of a man who is discouraged... who is living in despair... those are not the words of a man who is angry with God... a man who is doubting God.
- q. Those are the words of a man who is confident... confident in the love of God... confident in the presence of God... confident in the promises of God... confident in the power of God...and confident that even in a Roman jail cell... even when it was certain that he would lose his life for Christ... that he was in the center of God's will.
- r. Even with all that he was facing ... Paul was anxious for nothing... because he knew his life and eternal destiny was in the hand of God.
- s. Paul knew that for the Christian... the troubles of life are an opportunity for us to display the glory of God... an opportunity for us

to witness to the world of God's power and might... and our love for Him.

- t. How can we live life like that?... How can we live life with such confidence and such trust? ... How can we live in victory even when our lives are being buffeted by the storms and trials of life?
- u. The only way we can live life like that... is by living life from the inside out.
- v. That means to become so strong in our spirit... so strong in our inward man... so strong in our walk with the Lord... that no matter what we may face in life... we will remain strong and confident in our faith.
- w. To live a life of victory over the troubles, trials and the stress of life ... we must learn how to live from the inside out.
- x. God does not intend for believers to be devastated by the external forces that come against us... God intends for believers to live in victory... and we can... if we live from the inside out.

III. THE OUTWARD MAN AND THE INWARD MAN-

- a. In 2 Corinthians 4... Paul spoke of the "outward man" of the believer ... and he spoke of the "inward man" of the believer.
- b. The outward man refers to our physical body... obviously, our physical body is important... our physical body is the house ... the vehicle... for our soul.
- c. It is important that we do all we can... to stay as physically healthy as we can... for as long as we can... because the longer we live... the more time we will have in this world to love our families... and to serve Christ and make a difference for Him.
- d. I hear people say all the time that no one dies before their time... but that is simply not true... in human history there have been multitudes

of people who have died before their time... many because they abused their body... and neglected to care for their body.

- e. Think of all the time, effort and expense that we put in the care of our body... we exercise... we go to doctors... we take medicine... we pay a gazillion dollars in health insurance and medical costs... we sacrifice eating such things as bacon... and chocolate cake... in an attempt to stay healthy.
- f. And there is nothing wrong with that... except for the bacon part!
- g. The inward man that Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 4... refers to the non-physical part of us... it refers to the inward part of us... to the spiritual part of us... to our spirit... to our soul... to the part of us that relates to God... to the part of us where the Holy Spirit resides.
- h. While it is important for us to work to stay healthy physically... if we want to live in victory over the troubles, trials and stress of this world ... it is more important for us to be healthy and strong spiritually.
- i. Exercising the physical man is important... but exercising the spiritual man... the inward man is more important.
- j. No matter how hard a Christian tries to stay healthy physically... unless we are alive when the rapture comes... our body will eventually die.
- k. It is true that in the resurrection...the Lord will raise and glorify the deceased body of every believer.
- l. But in this world... in this life... our body as it is now is temporary... we need to fight the battle for physical health... but we also need to understand that it is a battle we will lose.
- m. But our inward man ... our soul... our spirit... is eternal... the spiritual part of us will never die.

- n. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 4:7-8 that when it comes to victorious spiritual living...bodily exercise profits little...but godliness is profitable for all things.
- o. For believers to live the victorious Christian life... for us to live in victory over the troubles and trials and stress of this life.
- p. It is important that as Christians we exercise ourselves to godliness ... that we daily do those things which will build up and strengthen our spiritual life.
- q. With all that he faced... how did Paul live such a victorious and confident life?
- r. Paul lived in victory because he made his spiritual life ... his walk with God... a priority.
- s. Paul was victorious because he lived life from the inside out ... he did not neglect his spiritual life... he did not neglect those things that would make him spiritually strong... he daily exercised himself unto godliness... he daily walked with the Lord... so that when trouble came... he had a heavenly and eternal perspective about life... he was spiritually strong...and he did not fall apart.
- t. Just as physical exercise is necessary to maintain physical health ... spiritual exercise is necessary to build up and mature the inward man.
- u. Let me share with you five things ... that you need to make a priority in your life... to deepen your walk with Christ... and build up and mature your nurture the inward man.
- v. If you want to be strong in the Lord... just coming to church on Sunday morning is not going to cut it... you need to exercise yourself unto godliness.

IV. FIVE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES-

- a. #1, Feeding on God's Word... just as our outward physical body needs food... so our inward man... our spirit needs food... and the Bible tells us that food is God's Word.
- b. To strengthen your inner man... your walk with Christ... you must continually feed your soul with the Word of God.
- c. The Navigators... a Christian ministry dedicated to helping believers to deepen their understanding of the Word of God... says there are five ways that we can feed the inward man on God's Word.
- d. #1, Hearing the Word... attending church worship... Sunday school... Bible studies... biblically-based seminars... in order to hear the Word of God taught by God-called and gifted speakers.
- e. If hearing the Word taught by God called God called preachers and teachers was not important to the Christian life... then God would not call and equip men to be pastors and preachers... and He would not call men and women to be teachers.
- f. #2, Reading the Word... there is no substitute for reading the Bible ourselves regularly all of our lives.
- g. #3, Studying the Word... studying is even more intense than reading ...to study the Word of God is to take it apart and put it back together ... to understand it... to delve into it... to ask questions of it.
- h. #4, Memorizing the Word... planting the Word of God in our hearts and minds.
- i. #5, Meditating on the Word... to turn a scripture over and over in our minds...until it has impacted our understanding and practice.
- j. #2, Fellowshiping with God in prayer... the second thing that will build up our inner man... is prayer.
- k. To be strong spiritually we need to set time aside that belongs to God and to us... and spend that time in prayer.

- l. Let me share with you a four-fold outline for prayer that might be helpful in your prayer life... it is an acrostic of the word “acts.”
- m. The four letters... stand for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.
- n. With those four different kinds of prayer... you can come into God’s presence and fellowship with Him.
- o. First, adore Him with praise... then confess your sins... thank Him for His blessings... and then present your supplications (requests) to Him.
- p. # 3, Faithfulness to God’s House and fellowship with God’s people... if you want to be strong spiritually ... you cannot ignore, neglect and treat lightly assembling with God’s people in public worship... for service ... and for fellowship.
- q. I have never meet a strong Christian... who was not a faithful, active, supportive and involved church member... and you won’t meet one either.
- r. #4, Finding time to be alone... we live in a noisy and busy world... and as a result we find ourselves uncomfortable with silence.
- s. To feed your soul... it is important that you find time to be alone with God... to worship Him... to love Him... to listen for His still small voice.
- t. #5, Fight to maintain the right priorities in life... there are literally a thousand things in life we can be involved with... and many of them are good things.
- u. But no matter how good something may seem to be ... if being involved in it hinders our walk with God... if it diminishes the work that God is doing in our life... if it consistently pulls us away from God’s House and God’s work... then we don’t need to be involved in it.

- v. Satan will not always tempt you to do something or to be involved in something that is bad or evil... Satan often tempts Christians to be involved with what may in itself be good... in order to take them away from what is best... from their walk with God ... from worship... from God's work... and God's people and house.
- w. To be strong spiritually we must keep our priorities straight... we should never allow anything... no matter how good it may seem to be ... to hinder our walk with God... your spiritual growth... and your faithfulness to God's House... God's people and God's service.

V. CONCLUSION-

- a. How healthy are you spiritually?... Are you living from the inside out?
- b. The Bible says that lost people... are alive physically... but dead spiritually... dead in trespasses and sins.
- c. *Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV) "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins."*