

## Raising God's Family in Hope

‡ **Daily inheritance** (vv.22-24)

‡ **Patience in youth** (vv.25-27)

‡ **Stout-hearted in suffering** (vv.28-30)

‡ **Compassion in affliction** (vv.31-33)

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, dear family of God:

Can you look at life objectively? One elder pastor asked himself, “Will I remember this problem in ten years?” “Planning for the worst and hoping for the best” helps you look at worst-case scenarios. President Harry S. Truman liked to say, “If ten problems are coming at you down the road, nine will go into the ditch before they get there.” Reality doesn't have to bite so hard if you're prepared.

There is no better way to prepare for life than God's Holy Book. The greatest loss for any family is when the Bible gathers dust on the shelf. The greatest gain for any family is when Dad's heart is in God's Word along with Mom and the kids. Even if your spouse or parents neglect God's Word, you can still treasure it by reading and thinking about it. The Holy Spirit is **Raising God's Family in Hope**.

‡ **Daily inheritance** (vv.22-24)

God's people were suffering the worst. For centuries Moses and now the prophet Jeremiah kept warning God's people about their rebellion against Him. With all His heart God wanted to bless them. But God will not let His grace be spurned. He will punish arrogance and pride, all who worship and serve created things rather than their Creator. God's justice finally fell in the iron fist of Babylon. Jerusalem was destroyed. God's temple burned. Children were starving. All because Israel refused to repent.

God looked for good men to stand in the gap between Him and His sinful nation. God is patient, far beyond what any of us could endure. But finally there was no one left to pray for Israel because the kings were bad, the priests were bad, the preachers lied to the people. No one spoke the truth. Everyone lied in court. The rich oppressed the poor. Widows were neglected. God had enough. That's why in this election year and every year, I keep praying God will not give us what we deserve for our sins. I pray God will have mercy on America and lead us heart and soul back to His grace in Christ.

But what if God has had enough of America's immorality? What if like so many other nations we finally have used up God's patience? What if we bring God's wrath down on our sin? We need God's **Daily inheritance** to prepare ourselves and our children for all life's troubles.

Walk with Jeremiah through the smoldering ruins of Jerusalem. Hear how desperate she was. For this faithful man of God it was like climbing a mountain. He struggled through the rubble, growing more tired and distressed the higher he climbed. But just when he was ready to give up, he came over the summit to see a beautiful blue mountain lake. At the depth of his depression came the height of his faith. Listen: *“Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, “The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.”* When life drops out the bottom, you and your children will still be strong if your greatest treasure is God's Word. This **Daily inheritance** of God's great love guarantees your family home, a mansion with fields and no fences in God's eternal land of light.

‡ **Patience in youth** (vv.25-27)

Listen how the Lord helps teenagers prepare for life on their own: *“The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young.”* This is power for **Patience in youth**.

Our family was given a great lesson in this truth in the weeks leading up to our oldest daughter's wedding. Just when everything seemed to be going great, our son-in-law lost his dream job just hours before they were ready to close on a condo. Boston real estate is at a premium, and the price of backing out of a deal is huge. But in the loss of their housing and his job, Katie and Anthony put their hope in God. And God was kind and merciful. God saved them the loss of their deposit by several hours. In a few weeks God gave Anthony a far better job. Most importantly he found out that his wife really does love him for who he is, not what he does or what he has. Love, not material things, makes marriage.

A few days after preaching on three of these verse for their wedding, it dawned on me that God gave us a similar experience. Before we were married thirty-one years ago, I asked the elderly widow letting me use her basement, if she really wanted my woodshop there. Filling my orders would take long hours. She said everything was fine. But after our wedding while I was unloading a trailer full of black walnut through her basement window, she said I'd have to move. Later my dear mother-in-law reminded me that God never takes anything away, but that He gives something better in its place. In the months that followed as I worked odd hours in my leased space nearer home, I realized how much better it was not troubling someone's dear grandmother with all my dust and noise. God gave me one big job through the Seminary Auxiliary for the display cases still serving in the Sem Library. We finished in the black.

### ✠ **Stout-hearted in suffering (vv.28-30)**

*“Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid [the yoke] on him. Let him bury his face in the dust—there may yet be hope. Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace.”* To folks whose life is easy these words sound harsh. If you've never missed a meal or you grew up with all the toys you want and you parents never said, “No,” how could you learn to survive adversity, much less overcome it? Only God can make you **Stout-hearted in suffering**.

God helps by reminding us again and again about the blessing of His discipline. Listen to just one passage from His New Testament letter to the Hebrews: *“My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.*” (Hebrews 12:5-8 NIV84) We learn to see God's love behind the difficulties of life. His solid purpose stands like a great coach training a championship team. Then we can enjoy our victory in the cross of Christ and His empty tomb. God's full and free forgiveness makes us **Stout-hearted in suffering**. In Christ, we triumph through our tears.

### ✠ **Compassion in affliction (vv.31-33)**

Trouble is not what the Lord wants. And trouble does not last forever. Did you catch that in our last three verses? *“For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.”* Our heavenly Father does not like to bring pain and heartache on His children. It broke His heart for His Son Jesus to have to die in our place. But if you ever doubt God's love for you, take a blank sheet of paper and draw one vertical line, then a horizontal line. Look at the cross and pinch yourself. God took on human flesh and blood in order to die for you. He proved His love like no other. Easter morning Jesus preached His victory over sin and death when He descended into hell in triumph.

“This too shall pass,” some like to say. But you can be sure that when it does, our faithful God promises, *“for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.”* (Malachi 4:2 NIV84) God's best case scenario is coming just around the bend. No one can imagine how truly great and good God is. God longs for the day when He can finally bless as He desires. And all who put their trust in Him will enjoy the depth of His **Compassion** and the marvel of His mercy. All who persevere, **Raising God's Family in Hope**, will never be disappointed. Jesus lives! The victory's won! He is our living **Hope** for every heart and every home. We rise to life in Christ alone. Amen.