

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, November 19, 2016

We all face difficulties in life. Those difficulties often lead to disappointment. And those disappointments can easily lead to discouragement. What's important is how we view each dilemma as it rears its ugly head. And we are wise to deal with each head on. It's quite easy to simply stew in our dilemma and just let it build up along with other circumstances that crop up in our lives. Before we know what's happening, we become victims of our circumstances and can't seem to find our way out of the quagmire of quandaries that bog us down in life. I know I'm presenting a dismal picture, but I truly believe many of those around us find themselves in such situations and really don't know what to do to get out of this downward spiral. The natural tendency is to keep our feelings to ourselves and not share our suffering with others who may well be able to help us get out of our funk.

This may startle you, but none of us are immune from the highs and lows, ups and downs, and numerous turns in the winding road of life. We will all eventually face the loss of loved ones, financial setbacks, physical ailments, business dealings that go south and death in God's time. We really can't control much in our life and simply need to learn how to roll with the punches. I often look to Hebrews 11 to put my life challenges in proper perspective. By reading through the "faith" chapter, I can see how the cloud of witnesses that has gone before us endured hardships that make my circumstances seem miniscule in comparison to their trials. And imagine, they all were looking forward to the coming Messiah and we simply have to look back to what we know to be true.

As a young boy I helped my grandmother in her garden in their back yard. She planted various vegetables on the ¼ acre plot that our family used daily. One of the important tasks required was to continually oversee the removing of the weeds from the garden. My grandmother was a hardy lady and she did most of the weeding herself. Occasionally my grandfather would assist her when he had a break in his farming chores. Her garden continually thrived with proper weeding and watering of the plants grown without any pesticides or additional nutrients. She nurtured her Victory Garden and it produced wonderful sustenance for the four of us who benefited from her hard work. In life, we need to remove the weeds and properly water our souls. Let's take this discussion a bit further.

I know Christians who attempt to take on this task on their own. Frankly, I've found that being part of a local assembly of believers works best. Hearing God's word preached from a pulpit and taught by qualified teachers has greatly enhanced my understanding of the Bible (my operations manual) and through it all I'm better equipped to handle the challenges of life. In Hebrews 10:24-25 the author states, *"And let us consider how we can spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

Can you see the day approaching? I can certainly see that we are nearing the end times and look forward to seeing Jesus face-to-face even though I certainly don't feel worthy. You see, I have some weeds in my garden that need to be removed and, if you look closely, I'm sure you do as well. They may just be sprouting out of the soil or hidden in the nooks and crannies, but they are there. Our sin nature sets us up for failure, but victory is in our grasp, if we simply place our faith in Christ. We need to accept the supernatural gift of salvation and find fellowship to nurture us as the Day approaches.

Here to serve,

Jim Langley. CLU

Passages to Ponder: Isaiah 13:6-11; Matthew 13:3-9; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 12:1-2; James 5:7-9

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Isaiah 13:6-11 New International Version (NIV)

⁶Wail, for the day of the LORD is near;
it will come like destruction from the Almighty.

⁷Because of this, all hands will go limp,
every heart will melt with fear.

⁸Terror will seize them,
pain and anguish will grip them;
they will writhe like a woman in labor.

They will look aghast at each other,
their faces aflame.

⁹See, the day of the LORD is coming
—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—
to make the land desolate
and destroy the sinners within it.

¹⁰The stars of heaven and their constellations
will not show their light.

The rising sun will be darkened
and the moon will not give its light.

¹¹I will punish the world for its evil,
the wicked for their sins.

I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty
and will humble the pride of the ruthless.

Matthew 13:3-9 New International Version (NIV)

³Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

Philippians 1:6 New International Version (NIV)

⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 12:1-2 New International Version (NIV)

¹²Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

James 5:7-9 New International Version (NIV)

⁷Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!