

"Journeys and Destinations – Mostly Dead"  
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"But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe." (Acts 14:19-20)

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Pastor Wally said that the stoning of Paul was probably the event that impacted his life the most. What event, if any, has impacted my life the most and why?

Pastor Wally pointed out that we have a relentless enemy. Most Christians will readily agree that Satan is truly a relentless enemy, but do I truly see him as the relentless enemy or do I have other enemies that receive more of my focus on a day-to-day basis? Explain.

Pastor Wally focused on 1 Peter 5:8 regarding how "the devil prowls around like a lion", but for some additional context, 1 Peter 5:6-11 points out that I am to "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. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen." Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines watchful to mean "Vigilant; attentive; careful to observe; observant; cautious." How "vigilant" and "observant" do I think I am when it comes to Satan? Explain.

From this passage of Scripture, it seems that humbling myself before God is linked with my ability to resist Satan's attacks on my character, family, and/or my integrity. Does my defense against Satan begin with humbling myself before God or have I been trying other things...even good things like regularly reading my Bible or faithfully attending church? If so, in what way(s) other than becoming humble have I tried and why? If no, why not?

So, how worked up were the Jews against Paul and his missions team??? From Antioch to Iconium is approximately 85 miles and from Iconium to Lystra is another approximately 30 miles. I don't know about you, but probably around mile marker 15, I'd be saying, "Aah, let him go! He isn't worth the effort. I'm going home." What drives someone to go to such extremes to get back at someone who has offended them? Explain.

Pastor Wally said that self-interest always controls those who are not in Christ and went on to say that I was like these folks, placing my interests before others, before coming to Christ. Does the old self-centered person still raise its ugly head in my life today? If so, in what way(s)? If not, why not?

John Piper has said that: "Perhaps the single most significant hindrance to Christian witness in the world today is our hunger for human approval. By nature, we think more about what people think of us than about what they think of Jesus. We crave acceptance and dread rejection — which inclines us toward whatever might improve others' perception of us. And that will very rarely, if ever, lead us to call them to repent from their sin and believe the gospel." To what degree do I agree or disagree with Piper's assertion that the need for human approval significantly hinders Christian witness and why?

In 2 Corinthians 11:25-27, Scripture recounts the suffering that Paul endured. After recounting all of his sufferings, in 2 Corinthians 12:10 Paul comes to the conclusion that "[f]or the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." How well do I respond to insults, hardships, persecutions or calamities and why?

What is necessary for someone to be able to be "content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities"? Explain.

Some miracle must have been involved following Paul's stoning because he got up and went back into the city, and the next day he walked 60 miles to Derbe. Paul never misses a beat. He gets up and goes right on preaching! He even goes back to Lystra and encourages the believers to continue in the faith. Picture it! Paul must have been badly bruised and bloodied. Would you likely question God on some level if something like this happened to you?

Pastor Wally said that Paul understood that his days were numbered and that he needed to work hard to spread the Gospel. Until God was done with Paul and Barnabas, there was no stopping them. They understood the truth of: "You have decided the length of our lives. You know how many months we will live, and we are not given a minute longer." (Job 14:5 NLT) How about me? Does my service...my ministry reflect a sense of urgency knowing that my days are truly numbered? If so, how so? If not, why not?

John Piper asked these questions: "Whether the world applauds us or attacks us, if they do not worship Jesus, they will die without real hope. Their approval (or rejection) of us has no bearing on our eternity, and it certainly will not save them. Will we surrender our need to be loved in order to truly love the lost? Are we willing to change the world in Jesus's name without being loved for it here, maybe without even being noticed much at all?" And???

How about my "Who's Your One"...the one who "will die without real hope"? Am I willing to "surrender [my] need to be loved to truly love the lost"...to possibly risk this person's friendship or love for the sake of this person's eternal soul? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally said that in order for me "to be of most earthly good to others, I must be consistently heavenly minded...be obsessed with Jesus. Spurgeon preaching on Matthew 6:10 ("...your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.") on April 30, 1884 said "God's will is done in heaven. How very practical! On earth his will is often forgotten, and his rule ignored. In the church of the present age there is a desire to be doing something for God, but few enquire what he wants them to do...we are in the same company below as they enjoy above. Up there they are with Christ, and here he is with us, for he has said — 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' There is a difference as to the brightness of his presence; but not as to the reality of it. So you see we are partakers of the same privileges as the shining ones within the city gates. The church below is a room of the one great house, and the partition which separates it from the church above is a mere veil of inconceivable thinness. Why should we not do the Lord's will on earth as it is done in heaven?" (emphasis added). Is my mind more focused on heavenly things or earthly things and why?

When I pray that God's "will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" through whom do I believe His will be done?

In what way(s) can I be of "earthly good" to others in order that His will is done on earth as it is in heaven?