

The Circuit Rider

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In this edition of “The Circuit Rider”, I would like to share with you a message that I was asked to preach at a recent Tri-State Particular Baptist Ministers Meeting. In light of our current economic conditions, I was asked to address the subject and show from Holy Scripture how Christians should respond in times of recession. May God bless the message to His glory and help believers to always stand strong in the faith.

Recession Woes and Recession Blessings—Considering, Job, Habakkuk, and Paul

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.” (Matt. 6:19-34)

In our current state of economic recession, we are hearing of families being devastated by the loss of jobs, foreclosures, and loss of retirement funds. With the vast amount of government bailout money being spent, the threat of huge corporate bankruptcies, and our current economic crisis, many people are beginning to re-evaluate their investments. Financial consultants are seeking safe investments for their clients as the stock market continues to roller coaster. In this economic meltdown, we are giving more serious thought to our investment strategies. People are asking if there is even such a thing as a SAFE INVESTMENT! It is at this point, that we as Christians, can remind people that the only genuine security that one can have is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. What we're seeing in our society is a world with a wrong set of priorities and misplaced values. People have invested too heavily in the things of this world without giving thought to laying up "treasures in heaven". As bad as our financial crisis is at the present, it could prove to be a blessing, if our nation would rethink its true sense of values and discover what it means to trust Christ and to invest in eternity.

Today, it's not uncommon to hear people complaining about financial conditions on all local, national, and worldwide levels. The truth of the matter is that everyone, including Christians, must face trials, perplexities, difficulties, illnesses, death, distress, sufferings, and even problems related to the downturn of economic conditions, including the world of investments and unemployment. Being a Christian does not immune us from troubles, but it should equip us with a spiritual insight as to how we should react in order to give God the "glory". Being the fallible creatures that we are, we may stand surprised at the happenings of life. However, the believer can take great comfort in the fact that nothing takes our Sovereign God by surprise because He has ordained all future events (Isa. 42:8-9, Eph. 1:11-12). The subject of HISTORY has rightly been related to our Creator God and defined as being His Story. The recording of Holy Scripture is the recording of History before it occurs and that is possible because our God declares "the end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:10).

In times of personal or national calamity, it's not uncommon for Satan to try and strike "fear" into our hearts (I Jh. 4:18). "Fear" and "faith" cannot abide in the same heart at the same time because they are as incompatible as a mixture of oil and water (I Jh. 5:4). The same "faith" that God grants us to exercise in salvation, God gives us for daily living regardless of national disasters, economic distress, or personal dilemmas. As we think on our subject and the word, recession, it's perhaps mostly associated with the world of finance, along with such terms as inflation and depression. However, recession can be simply defined as an act of withdrawing or going backward from one's previous condition. This can most definitely refer to economic decline, but it can also refer to the difficulties of life that may come upon us from all angles.

To illustrate such a state of recession, we are going to examine three biblical characters and how they experienced and reacted to their trials, but most of all how Almighty God brought them through victoriously and blessed them in the midst of their recessive state. "Job" will show us something about the hurt and heartache of losing family members as well as a vast fortune without losing "faith". "Habakkuk" will teach us something about the poor spiritual condition of his nation and how to stay in tune with God through "prayer". "Paul" will reveal to us something about the cost of serving the Lord Jesus Christ in an antagonist world and how to maintain "joy". We'll do a brief review on how this subject, Recession Woes & Recession Blessings, relates to "Job", "Habakkuk", and "Paul" and discover some lessons that we need to learn from each of them.

Let's First Of All Consider The Life Of Job

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in

it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.” (Job 1:6-12)

“Job” is perhaps one of the best known Old Testament characters that suffered for his “faith”. The theme of the Book of Job is, WHY DO RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE SUFFER? Job was not “perfect” (Job. 1:1) in the sense that he was sinless, but he was morally and ethically upright in his daily life. There came a day when “Satan”, “the accuser of the brethren” (Rev. 12:10), came to do one of the things that he does best, and that is to make accusation against “God’s elect” (Rom. 8:33). The result of this satanic affliction was a severe testing that fell upon this good and godly man by the name of “Job”. First of all, Job’s possessions (worldly wealth) and family were all wiped out, but he declared “the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:13-22). Secondly, Job’s good health was taken away and he suffered beyond measure (Job 2:1-8). His suffering was so bad that he “cursed” the day of his birth (Job 3:1-9). He even longed for “death” to come and overtake him (Job 3:10-26). Thirdly, Job’s wife turned against him telling him to “curse God, and die” (Job 2:9-10). Fourthly, Job’s “three friends” (Job 2:11-13) turned out to be some “miserable comforters” (Job 16:2) as they unjustly accused him. Fifthly, Job’s vindication finally came and he learned that God has a purpose in man’s suffering (Job 32-42).

At first, “Job” thought that God was dealing unfair with him, but he had to learn, like we must also learn, that our Sovereign God does nothing unfairly. All we deserve is God’s wrath and we can never become righteous within ourselves. Without the “imputed ... righteousness” (Rom. 4) of Jesus Christ, then it’s impossible to have a righteous standing before God. The God of creation who grants righteousness, also empowers through His Spirit the sustaining “grace” (II Cor. 12:9) to endure the trials of life. Let’s remember, that the most righteous person who has ever lived, the Lord Jesus Christ, suffered a most violent death and was nailed to an old rugged cross for the “sins” of “his people” (Lk. 1:77).

From the lips of “Job”, during his unbearable suffering, comes a testimony of faith. (“For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth: And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; *though* my reins be consumed within me.” Job 19:25-27) “Job” also declares that in this life the wicked often appear to prosper (Job 21:1-26), but God’s Word reminds us that a “day of judgment” is inevitable. (“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:” II Pet. 2:9) “Job” reminds us about the value of earthly treasures (Job 18:1-6), but declares that the wealth of “wisdom” is greater (Job 28:7-22). He had to learn, as do we, that God has a divine purpose in afflicting the godly (Job 36:1-7). God often sends the conflicts and sufferings of life in order to cleanse us from our pride and to demonstrate His disciplining love and grace (Job 36:8-18). The lesson that we learn from “Job” is that God permits His children to suffer in order to refine us and see ourselves in our deplorable sinfulness before our holy and righteous Creator (Job 42). After “Job” came through his great trial, “the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning” (Job 42:12).

Secondly, Let's Consider The Life Of Habakkuk

“The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! *even* cry out unto thee *of* violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause *me* to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence *are* before me: and there are *that* raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.” (Hab. 1:1-4)

“Habakkuk” ministered to the Southern Kingdom of Judah during the reign of Josiah. These were days, similar to ours, days of deep spiritual decline. “Habakkuk” questioned God and wanted to know “why” (Hab. 1:1-4) God didn’t do something about Judah’s problems. The “Lord” informed “Habakkuk” that He was preparing “the Chaldeans” (Babylon was the capitol of Chaldea) to punish Judah and take her into captivity (Hab. 1:5-11). Sometimes, God uses wicked people, more wicked than His own sinning people as a rod of punishment against them (Hab. 1:12-17). The theme of “Habakkuk” deals with how God’s patience with evil can square with His holiness. The answer lies in the fact that our Sovereign God has the prerogative of dealing with the wicked in His own time and way. In the meanwhile, “the just” must learn to “live by faith” (Hab. 2:4) and rest assured that our “Lord is in his holy temple” (Hab. 2:20) ruling and reigning over the affairs of man. Adversities come and we may not understand them, but we must trust God in the midst of those difficult times. Days of adversity, for a Christian, is a time to stop questioning the workings of God, but bow in submission to His authority and allow Him to teach us what we need to know.

Chapter three records the “prayer of Habakkuk the prophet” after he came off his “watch ... tower” with God (2:1-20). In chapter one, “Habakkuk” questioned God’s doing, but in chapter three, he declares that he has “heard” from God and is satisfied with His answer; however, what he “heard” made him “afraid”. We must never forget that it’s a “fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). “Judgment” (Hab. 1:7) was about to be poured out on the nation of Judah and “Habakkuk” cried out for “mercy” by asking God to “revive” (quicken) His people. (O LORD, I have heard thy speech, *and* was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy. Hab. 3:2) Here is an example of how God is so very merciful even in His “judgment”. God did not prevent Judah from going into 70 years of Babylonian captivity, but He did not allow them to be punished indefinitely.

Today, it may appear to us as it did to “Habakkuk”, that God is doing nothing, but let’s be reminded that He is busily at work behind the control panels of this world, and He has a plan for the ages that will come to pass as He sovereignly ordains. Until that plan comes into full focus, we, like “Habakkuk”, must learn to trust the “Lord” by “faith” (Hab. 2:4). As we see God’s hand of “wrath” move in “judgment” upon our country, we too need to be crying out for His “mercy”. When “Habakkuk” referred to the “midst of the years”, he was speaking of the days of calamity in which they lived, days of impending exile. We also are living in days of terrible moral and spiritual calamity, as it seems to grow worse from year to year. Not only has our nation lost its moral sense of direction, but most of our institutionalized churches have lost their “vision” (2:1) of a holy and righteous God. Our “prayer” needs to be that like Habakkuk’s, “revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy”. This word, “revive” in the Hebrew only appears 8 times in the Old Testament. It means to save, quicken, or to be restored, and refers in our text to how God’s people need spiritual renewal.

From “Habakkuk”, we learn two vital lessons about how God’s people can experience REVIVAL, which is nothing less than spiritual awakening. First of all, Revival is associated with “prayer” (Hab. 3:1). History proves that revival can always be associated with the submission of ourselves to God in “prayer”. To witness genuine revival, is to lean how to pray in submission to God and in confession

of our sins (Isa. 59:2). Secondly, Revival is a Sovereign “work” of God (Hab. 3:2). Revival is not a series of meetings, an emotional religious extravaganza, loud music, noisy preaching, walking isles, a quickly passing emotional phenomenon, or the manipulation of men’s minds. The “work” to which the “prophet ... Habakkuk” referred is not merely some activity found in a local assembly, but it’s the “work” of the Holy Spirit within the hearts of believers.

Mortal man cannot produce revival any more than he can contribute to the saving of his soul. Therefore, the only hope for our nation and the churches of our land is a mighty move of God, which should drive us to our knees in “prayer”. In answer to Habakkuk’s “prayer”, God did eventually “revive” His people, but not until after their chastisement did He deliver a “remnant” from Babylonian exile (Ezr. 9:8). We may have to “wait” a few days, weeks, months, or like it was in Habakkuk’s time, many years, but whatever the case, we should not cease crying out for God to do what only He can do in turning hearts back to God. We don’t know whom God has elected to save; therefore, we need to “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15). Likewise, we don’t know if God will ever send a revival to our land, but we need to pray for it and plead His “mercy” upon us. Whether or not God will send revival upon our nation, we do not know, but this one thing we do know, there is coming a day when God will set the record straight and make all things right. Like “Habakkuk”, we must place our trust in Him, despite the outward sufferings of life, and know that our “blessed hope” is in the Second Coming of our Lord (Titus 2:13). “Habakkuk” began by asking God “why” (Hab. 1:3), but he concluded by declaring that devastation could not keep him from rejoicing in the “God” of his “salvation”. (“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God *is* my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ *feet*, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.” Hab. 3:17-19)

Thirdly, Let’s Consider The Life Of The Apostle Paul

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Phil. 4:19

The Philippian epistle is believed to have been written by “Paul” while he was a prisoner at Rome. The theme of this letter is the adequacy of Christ for every experience of life. Regardless of privation, persecution, or prosperity, Christ is all that we need. If Jesus Christ is the Lord of our life, then His “joy” (Phil. 1:4,25, 2:2, 17-18, 4:1) will triumph in our hearts regardless of the outward circumstances. We’re all aware of Paul’s dramatic conversion on the Damascus Road when God changed the murderer into a missionary (Acts 9:1-19). Here is a man who knew what it was to suffer for the sake of Christ, as the persecutor became the persecuted. Because of his hateful actions against the church, he was received with skepticism following his conversion, but little did these believers know at the time how God was going to use him to deliver the gospel of Grace “to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). Following his conversion, it’s generally believed that “after ... many days” (Acts 9:23) refers to Paul’s “three years” in “Arabia” (Gal. 1:17-18) where God prepared him for ministry. It appears that during or after these “three years”, Paul made a visit back to “Damascus”.

His fearless preaching at “Damascus” soon stirred Jewish persecution to the point where he was let down over the “wall in a basket” in order to escape the threat of death (Acts 9:20-31). This is the first recorded episode in the life of “Paul” (“Saul” being his Hebrew name and “Paul” his Roman name) of the suffering that he would endure for the sake of preaching the Gospel (Acts 13:9). The time frame of Paul’s going to “Arabia” and his escape from “Damascus” is not definite from Scripture. But, what we do know, is that he went to both places and God’s Grace prepared him for his “sufferings” (Rom. 8:18). From “Damascus” he went to “Jerusalem” where the believers were “afraid of him” until “Barnabas” convinced them otherwise. This visit to “Jerusalem” is probably the one

recorded in his letter to the Galatians when he saw “Peter” for “fifteen days” (Gal. 1:18-19). It was during this stay in “Jerusalem” that he “disputed against the Grecians” (Hellenists or Jews who spoke Greek which happened to be the same group that debated Stephen in Acts 6:1) and they “went about to slay him”. “The brethren” came to Paul’s rescue and shipped him back to his hometown in “Tarsus”. We learn very early from Paul’s conversion that the stronger he grew in the Lord, the more the Jews wanted to kill him. That same truth applies to us in the fact that the greater we grow in the Lord, the greater will be Satanic attack against us. We, as Christians, must always remember that the days of our spiritual combat will not be over until we get to heaven.

Paul’s missionary tours are recorded, telling not only of his blessings, but also of the many trials along the way (Acts 13-28). God used him to establish churches and see a multitude of sinners converted to Christ. He witnessed to demon possessed occultist (Acts 13:4-12), he healed the cripple (Acts 14:8-9), he was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19-20), he disputed with the brethren over circumcision and a traveling companion (Acts 15), he was imprisoned (Acts 16:25-40), he bore witness to government officials (Acts 24-26), and he suffered shipwreck (Acts 27). Paul’s ultimate desire was to testify of the Grace of God in “Rome” (Acts 19:21) which God assured him would come to pass (Acts 23:11). God used the evil Roman government to finance Paul’s missionary voyage to Rome, but that voyage was not without great trial.

Under divine inspiration, “Paul” writes something about the hardships that he endured by the grace of God. “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.” (II Cor. 11:23-30)

“Paul” was not preoccupied with himself, but with the things of God and he saw the events in his life to have a sovereign purpose of furthering the “gospel”. “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;” (Phil. 1:12). God assures Paul that his suffering will result in promoting the “gospel”, even to the political “palace” as well as to the surrounding community (Phil. 1:13). It appears that his imprisonment had inspired others to stand for and “preach” the “gospel” (Phil. 1:14-17).

All that concerned Paul, was that “Christ” be “magnified” whether he lived or died. “According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death. For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.” (Phil. 1:20-21) The secret to Paul’s “joy” was a life focused on the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:22-26). From his own personal experience, Paul admonishes us to endure the difficulties of life joyfully (Phil. 1:27-30).

The circumstances of life should never determine a believer’s “joy”, but remaining steadfast in faith. “If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:” (Phil. 2:1-

5) Our all sufficient example is the supreme Example of Christ Himself Who “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). A life of misery and frustration is a life where “all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Phil 2:21).

The desire of Paul ought to be the desire of every believer, regardless of what life throws at us. “Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:8,14) Christians need to be on guard against those things that can steal away our “joy” in the Lord (Phil. 3:1-2). Believers need to view the things of this world as having no value when compared to what we have in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:3-21).

Regardless of economic distress, financial collapse, business failure, personal suffering, family tragedy, or whatever the case, Christ is our sufficiency. “Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Phil. 4:4-13)

Christians ought to stand firm because they are a heavenly people whose eyes are fixed on things eternal. Houses, land, finances, health, and life itself can be lost, but not our eternal salvation in Jesus Christ (Jh.10:28-29, Rom. 8:35-39). God’s prescription is simply, worry about nothing and pray about everything. In such times of turmoil, we can find “peace which passeth all understanding” because our “peace” is anchored in the Eternal “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). This in itself will prove to be a good prescription for one’s spiritual, mental, and emotional health. With God given “peace”, we can pillow our heads at night without worrying about the stock market, pathetic politicians, or fanatic rulers on foreign soil. Nobody with good health wants to die because God has given us the desire for self-preservation, but we take comfort knowing that our God has fixed the length of our days and we are indestructible until the Lord calls us home. Likewise, nobody in his or her right mind wants to lose any money, but our attitudes ought to be that, we don’t want anything God doesn’t want us to have. We are mere stewards of God’s belongings and everything we possess is on loan to us; therefore, we must learn to hang on to everything we have, including our possessions, loved ones, and life itself, with a loose hand. Every “good ... and perfect gift” (Jam. 1:17) that we have in life is not given to us out of merit, but is a gift of God’s grace.

Closing

The very word, recession, leads one to think in the negative; however, “the Lord seeth not as man seeth” (I Sam. 16:7) or in other words, God’s ways are not the ways of man. This means that God can take what appears to be negative events and use them for ultimate blessings. We learn that even under adverse conditions, God will magnify Himself and will work for the good of His people. The modern financial mentality of get today and pay tomorrow is not biblical, but reflects a culture of

materialism gone wild, even to the point of idolatry. Even many professing Christians have become guilty of practicing poor stewardship (Gen. 41, Prov. 22:7). Greed and selfishness have dug a deep ditch for the American people that must someday be reckoned. In other words, payday is around the corner for the future generations of America and as bad as the national debt is, it does not compare to the spiritual bankruptcy of a nation that has turned its back on God. All of the headline news of today dealing with the downturn in our economy points to the spiritual decline of America and God's judgment against our nation's sins.

In closing, I call your attention, once again, to the words of Paul when he said, "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities" (II Cor. 11:30). The Word of God tells us very clearly that times of recession, difficulty, perplexity, distress, sickness, hardships, or whatever the "infirmities" of life may be, it can be a time for God to be "magnified" and glorified in and through His people. As bad as the economy is today, it could prove to be a blessing if God would use it to call the churches of America to it's knees, to repentance, and to confession of sins. Having the assurance of God's Omnipotent presence and being confident that He is Sovereign over all things, should comfort our hearts and give us hope for tomorrow. Regardless of how deep the valley's of life, God has an eternal plan for the ages and we can rest in "faith" that He makes no mistakes. That is why we can sing in the midst of the storms of life: "My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid Rock I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand."

A MINISTRY UPDATE

I'm glad to report that WTRU has agreed to continue our broadcast for another year. The economic situation has affected every aspect of life, including Christian ministries. Our income is down, but God has been faithful. I would like to say a "special thank you" to those of you who support Covenant of Grace Ministries with your prayers and financial gifts. This ministry belongs to the Lord and will continue as long as God determines.

As of June 21st, I'll begin a new Bible Study series on WTRU (AM 830) at our regular Sunday, 1:00 PM, broadcast time. The series will be a study on the life of Gideon and Samson that will run through October 18th. That same series will soon be downloaded to the audio page of our website, www.covenantofgraceministries.com, which can be heard at your listening convenience.

I continue to write my book dealing with my 40 years of ministerial experiences. No deadline has been set for completion, but I estimate that I'm about half way finished. I'm deliberately taking my time, trying to make sure that I leave nothing out that I later regret not inserting. Hopefully, this time next year it will be finished or at least near the finish line. I'm grateful for the help of Dr. Richard Belcher in his assistance to me in setting up my page format. He is an accomplished author as well as a great preacher/teacher of God's Word. His ministry has been a blessing to me down through the years.

Keep looking up, even in these days of recession. God is still on His throne! May these be days when God's people examine their own lives and pray as never before for a spiritual awakening in our land.

Because of His Sovereign GraceBWM