

The Difference Between Crazy and Life-changing

Many of us remember the words of wisdom our Moms and Dads would give us when we were young, especially when they were upset with us. “How many times do I have to tell you...” “Shut the door, we’re not air conditioning the outside”. “What were you thinking??” “Were you born in a barn?” By the way, it’s never a good idea to answer a question that was meant to be rhetorical. And it’s always bothered me that my mother, of all people, didn’t seem at all sure where I was born.

How about this one? “Sometimes the greatest truths come in prepositional phrases.” Yeah. That’s probably not one of the more popular ones, but it’s still true.

Recently, we looked at the three great commands to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. I thought it might help us all to explore those ideas a bit more in depth together. It’s worth noting that when Paul tells us to rejoice in the book of Philippians, he attaches to the command the crucial prepositional phrase; “in the Lord”.

That’s a great phrase. It’s the practical difference between “crazy” and “life changing”. Paul didn’t rejoice that he was arrested. He rejoiced that while he was in bondage, he was able to spread the gospel to the palace guards. That’s rejoicing in the Lord. He wasn’t excited to die. He was excited to die and be with Christ. He had the perspective we looked at before. Paul was a man who knew how to find his spiritual “sweet spot”. That sweet spot is found “in the Lord”. David knew about this.

When David and his men returned from battle in 1 Sam. 30, they found the city where they lived burned with fire and their wives and children had been taken by the Amalekites. The men with David were not happy, as they had been following his leadership and this was the result. How does a person handle that kind of stress? Hundreds angry because of the loss of their families and wanting to kill you because of it! In 30:6, here’s how Scripture tells us David handled it, “Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.”

Fantastic. But how does that work? How did David go from “crazy” when hundreds were wanting to kill him to “life changing” and lead them to victory?

No details are provided, but we can gather some thoughts from the statement itself. And the Psalms are full of examples of David doing this (eg, Ps. 130:5). How do we strengthen ourselves “in the Lord”?

1. To start, God is the object of our attention, our affections, and our attitudes.
2. His character, not our situation, is the focus of our meditations.

3. God knows everything, has limitless power, is everywhere, is righteous, good, merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and altogether wise. Get the idea here?
4. Next is His Word and promises. God had made some promises to David. It's difficult to sit on the throne as he was promised and be dead at the same time. David reminded himself of what was promised, Who promised it, and how it applied to hundreds of men thinking about killing him.
5. If David were to have victory over his enemies, it started in situations like this.

A limitless, faithful God is the object of our faith, not emotion, not what we immediately see or scenarios we can imagine and worry about. I remember talking with a mentor about concerns that a family member might die. He responded with the words, "What then, Dan? Isn't that 'very much better'?" Ugh. Harsh words, but true. If the worst that can happen to us is to die, that ain't so bad if you're a believer. Terrible grammar, wonderful reality.

I also mentioned later in my devotional the words of Phil. 4:4-6, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Did you happen to catch the other prepositional phrase? When we pray it's "with thanksgiving". I discussed this previously, but would only add this to what I wrote. That thanksgiving also comes from our "in the Lord" viewpoint. That's our spiritual sweet spot. That's what makes the difference between crazy and life changing.

I mentioned the examples of David strengthening himself in the Lord being found often in the Psalms. Let's remember that the Psalms were songs. Few things can be as encouraging as music that is founded on truth! Music can be wonderful healing to our souls.

I like to keep these devotionals shorter, but at the end of this one, I'm going to share some passages with you. I was encouraged to give them in print rather than just use the references, so it stretches our devotional a bit.

I collect my go-to verses and immerse myself in them when I have my 3 am "meditation time" with the Lord. The demons often show up in the early morning hours to rob sleep. I'm tempted to give observations, but would rather you meditate on them and get the joy out of it. Here are just a few of the ones I have found helpful.

Feeling insecure, anxious?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.

Does God care? Will He answer your prayers?

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Matt. 7:7-12

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Matt. 10:29-31

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.
Bothered by your shortcomings and failures? (Encourage your heart with truth!)

Psalms 103:1-14

Bless the Lord, O my soul;
And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,

Who satisfies your mouth with good *things*,
So *that* your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
The Lord executes righteousness
And justice for all who are oppressed.
He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the children of Israel.
The Lord *is* merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
He will not always strive *with us*,
Nor will He keep *His anger* forever.
He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
As a father pities *his* children,
So the Lord pities those who fear Him.
For He knows our frame;
He remembers that we *are* dust.

Concerned about what other's think?

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.
Proverbs 16:7

When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

It's difficult to find peace in the problem. But there is peace "in the Lord". That's the difference between "crazy" and "life changing".

Pastor Dan

