



“Maintaining Momentum”

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:10-12 NIV)

Staying Violent

When you align yourself with Jesus Christ, you put yourself on a collision course with the world and the flesh. In other words, there's no such thing as dual citizenship; to be a follower of Jesus means you clearly understand the difference between those inside God's Kingdom and those outside God's Kingdom. There's you and there's them. There's salt and there's that which is salted. There's light and there's that which is lit.

Eventually, that means conflict with a world that is against recovery; against the kingdom of heaven; and against Jesus himself. And thus, persecution. Some of you work daily in such a world—it is ruthless and relentless. You are insulted and all kinds of evil things are falsely spoken of against you because of your commitment to Christ. At just such a time, you may be tempted to think that God is displeased with you or disciplining you. But Jesus assures us that when we are at war with the world because of Him (and not because we are prickly, cranky people), it is evidence that we are close to Him.

Discipleship exacts an immense cost on the bad days. Or are they really bad days? Did Jesus wire the kingdom in such a way that the bad days are really good days? Martin Luther once said, “When the Devil harasses us, we know ourselves to be in good shape.” (Howell 2006, 89)

Allegiance to Christ means war with the world. Moreover, war has already been declared by the enemy. Satan has made a pre-emptive strike. *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. (1 Peter 2:11 NIV)* What's our response?

Showing no mercy to sinful desires

12From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. (Matthew 11:12 NIV) In other words, God's kingdom is on the move, extending to the corners of the earth; and those who belong to the

kingdom will surrender all that they are to all that Christ is! True believers are “all in” as they strive to enter the narrow gate (Luke 13: 24).

With persecution outside, Satan fighting us through temptations, and our own lusts within, every disciple of Christ is in a battle, one that demands spiritual strength and ongoing vigilance When you are doing battle with sin, it requires preparation and a desire to absolutely eradicate it from your life. (Welch 2001, 225-245)

In Matthew 11:12, God's people are “forceful”; the ESV uses the word “violent.” God's people must possess a “Jack Bauer” intensity at rooting out evil and a fierce determination to see that God's kingdom is expanded. But the evil that is rooted out is not so much the evil out there as it is, FIRST, the evil within that wages war on our souls. “Each one is tempted when by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.” (James 1:14 NIV)

Reserving daily time with God

For self-examination

- H Am I hurting? If you are hurting and won't admit it and deal with it, it's going to mess up what you're doing.
- E Am I exhausted?
- A Am I angry?
- R Do I resent anybody?
- T Am I tense? anxious? fearful?

Bible reading

Oh, the joys of those who . . . delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do. (Psalm 1:1-3 NLT) The key to growth is to have roots down deep in God's Word, and the way you get roots down deep in God's word is to meditate on it, seriously think about what you read in the Bible and then deliberate about how it applies to your life.

And prayer in order to know God and His will for my life and to gain the power to follow His will.

All of the recovery steps are covered in the Lord's prayer: “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” That's saying I realize I'm not God but You are—that's Steps 1 and 2. “May Your will be done, may Your kingdom come.” That's Step 5. “Give us this day our daily bread.” That's Step 3. “Forgive us our debts.” That's Step 4. “As we forgive others.” That's Step 6. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” That's relapse, that's this step.

A sense of having our sins forgiven is the mainspring and life-blood of love to Christ. The only way to make men holy is to teach and preach free and full forgiveness through Jesus Christ. The secret of being holy ourselves is to know and feel that Christ has pardoned our sins. Peace with God is the only root that will bear the fruit of holiness. Forgiveness from Christ must occur before we can become more and more like Christ. (Ryle)