Devotion #285

**Bitter/Sweet**

**Isaiah 33:6 (NASB)** *“He will be the stability of your times, A wealth of salvation, wisdom and knowledge.”*

From the time our oldest son was six years of age, I have taken him on a Father/Son retreat. Six was the minimum age for attendance. In those days he and I would travel all day on Friday and arrive for the evening session and stay overnight and enjoy a full day of godly messages and a time of fun on Saturday. Then we would leave after dinner and drive the seven hours home getting in around midnight. Once our other boys were old enough, I started taking them. Since then we have made that journey many times over the years, making it a great tradition for us.

This year was especially wonderful because the boys are not boys anymore. They are young men, each with their own lives making it much harder to find time for this event. So to be together for this was a great joy for me. But, as I’m sure you can imagine, it was a bittersweet time. Sweet because of all I just said, but bitter because of the fleeting years and the awareness that things like this come to an end eventually. Every time I arrive at the camp I still see their little faces and bodies as we once enjoyed all the fun things - the fishing, the rifle range, the archery range, climbing the hill to the overlook and lots of other memories. So, it is always a joy but somewhat sad at the same time. My one real regret over the years is that I was never able to have that time with our daughter for a father/daughter retreat. People were not doing those in those days. I guess it would be more difficult in some ways with the particulars, but it would make a great ministry for someone today.

In all that emotion, I am reminded of what God said to Israel. It is our verse for today. “*God will be the stability of your times.”* The situation was, Sennacherib, ruler of the Assyrians, had tricked King Hezekiah, King of Israel, by invading Israel when he said he wouldn’t. As you can imagine, that put Israel in a state of panic. To which the Lord responded with these words through the prophet Isaiah. Later, Judah would take the Assyrians in battle, but only after the people got together and prayed. The point is that no matter what the situation of life, God will always be our stability.

I thought this story fit with life for most of us who enter into those bittersweet times. Life is good and fun and all the rest when things are going well. It is in those times people often forget the Lord. But in the times of sorrow, He comes alive to them again. The truth is that God should always be the One to whom we look for stability - in both sweet times and bitter times. Otherwise, we, too, will be tempted to follow our emotions and our human thinking which will usually cause us to be overwhelmed with sorrow, but when we remember that God is to be our stability in life, we find the hope to continue on.

This is especially important when we come to the end of our days when you and I are facing the fourth quarter of life and more is behind us than in front of us. As much as we have learned to trust in God for everything in days gone by, we must do the same now. This is again why Isaiah could say what He did. God will be the stability of our times. Anything or anyone else will fail us.

Who or what are you looking to to give you the stability you need? Is it your children? Is it your spouse? Is it your parents? Is it your job? Is it our country or political leader? All those have their place in our lives, but, in the end, only God can bring the stability we long for. Make sure He is the One you trust. Otherwise the bitterness of life and fleeting of time will overtake you.