

Comfort in Suffering

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Lesson #4

Preparation to Study God's Word

Personal faith in Christ secures a permanent place in Heaven for you (John 14:1-3, 3:36, 10:28). But faith in Christ does not guarantee consistent fellowship with God.

Personal faith in Christ establishes a relationship with God which creates an opportunity for fellowship with Him. How long we stay in fellowship with God is a matter of choice.

Any moment we commit sin, no matter how little the sin is, we lose our fellowship with a holy God. However, we can regain fellowship with God by confessing or naming our sins to God the Father and the Holy Spirit will take control of our lives again (1 John 1:9; Revelation 3:20).

If we confess [acknowledge] our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [sins, known or forgotten] (1 John 1:9).

You may want to pause and acknowledge, directly to God, any sin that may hinder you from being fully blessed through the Word of God.

Job and His Children Under Fire

The suffering of Job in relation to his family can be classified in two categories:

- his children
- his wife.

Here we examine Job's testing in relationship to his children. It is amazing how people put so much emphasis on having children. It is shocking to see how many of these people end up abusing and sometimes killing them.

A lot of people want to have children but are not able. These people resort to adoption or in vitro fertilization.

In fact, there is nothing wrong with a desire to have children; however, children do not generate happiness. Undoubtedly, children are one of God's many blessings in the right situation and at the right time.

. . . How blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments. His descendents will be mighty on earth (Psalms 112:1-2a).

When the quest of having children or the love for children supersedes the love for God, who is actually the source of that blessing, then everything in connection with having children goes sour.

But, when a believer's happiness is dependent on God and not on his children, and he is tested in the area of children, passing the test to the glory of God becomes easier.

Indeed, I don't know whether you have been tested in this area and flunked or not. My job is not to judge you.

The fact you are still alive means that if you have failed you will have a chance to take a similar test and pass it.

A wise believer is one who never allows his failures to keep him down. He falls, gets up, gets back into fellowship with God by naming the sin(s) that caused his failures (1 John 1:9), and moves on.

When I was in college at Tennessee State University, I registered for calculus class. Mathematics has been my favorite subject right from childhood; God gave me a natural talent in this area. I have tutored many of my peers all the way from elementary school up to college in many subjects, but especially in mathematics.

I truly became arrogant in this calculus class and consequently never studied my textbook or even looked over my assignments.

Arrogance is very dangerous.

It destroyed Satan (who thought He should be like God - Isaiah 14:12 - 15). In my arrogance, I said to myself, "*Remember you are math yourself; you don't need to study calculus to pass it.*" Indeed, I became arrogant and never studied.

When the first test was given, I scored 60%, a "D". That was the lowest score I had ever received! I was shocked. Yes, it was a wake-up call to my self-deception.

My attitude changed immediately. I started studying my calculus textbook and other related mathematics books. After a few weeks, another test was given. One challenging question was included as a 15-point bonus.

But this time I was prepared. The next morning, the instructor walked in, handed my test score and eyed me differently. This time the test score had changed from 60% to 115%! What a great turn-around!

At this juncture, you have the right to ask yourself a question as a believer:

Have you ever ignored learning and applying Bible truth? Have you ever flunked a spiritual test?

If you have, you are not alone. We all have failed at one time or another, but the fact that we are still alive means that God has allowed us to have another chance. **That's grace.**

I had another test in my calculus class, but this time I was prepared. Never underestimate the power of preparation.

Today, many believers take learning the truths of the Bible so lightly that when testing comes their way they fail and disappoint the **Lord Jesus Christ**. The study and application of Bible doctrine and obedience to the Word of God is what changes our lives and prepares us to pass life's tests.

Job was always ready. An accumulation of Bible knowledge in his soul was all he needed to pass his tests to the glory of God.

He loved the Lord more than he loved his children. Bible truth in his soul was not only the true source of his happiness (Jeremiah 15:16), but a source of his spiritual preparation against Satan and his attacks (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Now on the day, when his [Job's] sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." . . . and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people [Job's sons and daughters] and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you (Job 1:13-15, 19).

Satan is a genius. He knows where it hurts. His first ambush was on Job's children. Why? Because Job loved his children.

But his love for his God was greater, and that is what Satan never realized.

Job's First Test Score

He [Job] said "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Through all this, Job did not sin [curse God to His face nor did he blame God] (Job 1:21-22).

Point of Doctrine: You could die today while your children live. Or your children could die while you live. Death is never selective.

God never says, “This person is too old or too young to die.” Therefore, whichever way one slices it, God is our only lasting portion.

Every one of us will depart with nothing material. The only thing that goes with us is what we have in our souls -- Bible doctrine, the Word of God and the rewards that comes from it's application to our lives while we are still on this earth.

The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever. (Isiah 40:8).

Job's Testing in Relation to His Wife

... A prudent wife is from the Lord (Proverbs 19:14b).

The Bible says, “A prudent wife” indicating that not all wives are prudent, (but neither are all husbands prudent).

Obviously, the relationship between a husband and a wife should be the greatest relationship ever formed in this life apart from one's relationship with God.

People can abuse, criticize, and even malign you, but when the assault is coming from your own spouse, it is a different story.

Spouses are supposed to support one another. Spouses should stick together in health and in sickness, in prosperity, and in poverty.

In Job's tests, the reverse was the case. Job's wife, the very person who was supposed to be on his side, said to him:

“Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!” (Job 2:9).

For she was familiar with God's punishment for cursing God as outlined in Leviticus 24:10-16.

Next time, in lesson #5, we will look at Job's response to his wife's bitter words - did he respond in kind or was he a man of integrity? Until then may the Lord bless you and keep you.

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