

Comfort in Suffering

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Lesson #3

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.

True Testing

A test is designed to evaluate how much an individual has learned and retained over a certain period of time. It could be about a lesson learned in a week, a month, or a year.

In order for a test to be accurate, the questions must be kept secret from the student. Also, it should be given without advance notice. Good students will pass the test with flying colors and lazy students will be taken off guard.

A good student is one who studies at all times and anticipates testing every time he steps into a classroom. If this is true in the human realm, would it not also be true in God's realm?

God, Satan, & Job

Where was Job when this court hearing was in session in Heaven?

Job was down here on earth enjoying life. Did God reveal to Job that he was about to have the biggest test of his life? No.

Why not?

If God had warned Job either in a dream or vision or by any other means, Satan would have claimed to have won his argument about God. The purpose of the test would have been ruined.

But God did not warn Job because God is the Author of Wisdom. Therefore, nothing was revealed to Job. It took him by surprise.

The Silence of God

Throughout Job's testing God was completely silent. He did not make Himself known either by a vision or by any other means of communication available to Job at that time.

Why?

Because God knew Job was prepared.

Indeed, the only thing Job had at the time of his testing was the Word of God, the Bible doctrine stored in his soul. We have heard the saying, "You can't take it with you." That is true to a certain extent.

When a believer dies, he leaves everything material here on earth. A believer takes with him the Bible doctrine in his soul and the reward that comes from applying it our lives.

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8).

For example, circumstances can strip away everything you have. But whatever is in your soul cannot be taken away. Why not? Because no one can enter into your soul but you alone. (No one, not even Satan has access to this information).

Job did not hear God's voice during these severe tests. Job was not perfect; he could not understand why he was suffering. Maybe you find yourself in the same situation.

Job failed once in a while, yet he never allowed his failures to lure his love and attention away from the Lord and neither should you. That is the beauty of Job's spiritual lifestyle. He never

stayed down when he fell. The Apostle **Paul described not only himself but also the winning attitude attitude of Job.**

But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind [including failures] and reaching forward to what lies ahead [fulfillment of God's plan] (Philippians 3:13b).

Paul encourages us to adopt this same winning attitude.

Indeed, while God was silent, the spectators -- people in Job's kingdom plus elect and fallen angels, both inside and outside the courtroom of heaven -- were watching every move, every statement, and every reaction of Job.

Today, the angels and the people on the earth are watching us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ . They are watching every action, every word, and every step we take.

We have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men (1 Corinthians 4:9b).

They cheer when you say, "Thank you God for this suffering," and they sigh when you whine and murmur over your situation.

There are five principles that you should remember when you are under testing.

Principle 1: God may keep silent, but He is never unaware of your circumstances.

Principle 2: The silence of God in your suffering does not mean that God is incapable of delivering you from the suffering. Nor does it mean that He no longer answers prayers.

Principle 3: The silence of God does not in any way imply that He has forgotten you in your suffering.

Principle 4: When the testing is over, He will ultimately respond with greater blessings to you if you utilized the Bible doctrine in your soul and passed the test to His glory.

Principle 5: Therefore, no matter what you are going through, though God may seem unconcerned, He is aware of and in total control of your situation.

We leave you to consider these principles. Next time, in lesson #4 we will see how Job relates to believers of today. Until then may the Lord bless you and keep you.

Job of Yesterday & Believers of Today

Believers of today have at least three advantages over believers of Old Testament Times.

1. They did not have the benefit of the completed canon of Scripture to use as a resource as we have. Most Christian households today have at least one Bible that anyone can use.
2. Believers of the Old Testament did not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as we do today (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19).
3. The mystery doctrine of the Church Age was never revealed to Job. This unique age was hidden from every believer of the past, including Job. But it has been made known to us (Colossians 2:26). Therefore, it follows doctrinally, if Job passed the tests with the little that was revealed to him, how much more God anticipates that we will pass every test that comes our way since we have been given so much more.

We who may be facing situations similar to what Job faced in the past should ask ourselves this question: What if Satan has gone to the courtroom of Heaven and obtained permission to test us as he did Job?

Are we failing our Lord or passing these tests?

The Testing of Job vs. the Testing of Believers Today

Here is a man who fears God (Job 1:1).

He is a person who loves to have his sons and daughters around him (Job 1:4),

a man of great wealth (Job 1:3),

and a believer who has earned God's approval (Job 1:8).

Now he is about to face the test of his life: in the area of family, wealth, health, and even in relationships, in every facet of life.

In our next lesson, #4, we will see Job's testing in his relation to his family and examine his test score. Until then may the Lord bless you and keep you.