

Comfort in Suffering

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Lesson #1

‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’ (Jeremiah 29:11)

Introduction

When I got the idea for *Comfort in Suffering* I had recently been employed by Vanderbilt Hospital. While there, I observed pain and suffering of the patients contrasted with the great care and concern of the health professionals and staff.

This prompted me to reflect on the suffering of man on earth tempered by the great provision and care our Heavenly Father has given each believer for these situations.

The book of Job provided inspiration with its great lessons. It magnificently portrays great comfort in suffering, comfort provided by God and God alone.

World of No Suffering

Imagine for a moment what this world would be like if there was no suffering, no sickness, no hospitals, no medical doctors, no divorces, heartaches, frustrations, bills, taxes, tears, not even death. Wouldn't such a world be superb?

Every normal person wants to be in a state of perfect happiness. Unfortunately, no matter how hard we try to avoid these cankerworms of suffering, somehow or other we still bump into disaster without warning.

The good news is that the Bible tells us all the suffering of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ ends here on earth. The future is nothing but glory.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18 NIV).

And [God] will wipe away every tear from their [believers'] eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things [sickness, hospitals, medical doctors, heartaches, tears, plus all kinds of suffering] have passed away (Revelation 21:4 NKJV).

Open Invitation

Initial entrance into fellowship with God begins at the cross where Jesus Christ paid everyone's debt to God.

Our Position: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). That means there can be no relationship with God because of sin.

Our Debt: "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a). That means that every person must pay this debt before God will be satisfied. The question is, how can you pay since you are totally broke? Man was born a sinner and has nothing to offer God.

Our Debt Paid: Jesus Christ elected to pay the penalty on our behalf. He actually became a substitute for us. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). The penalty has been paid by Jesus actually bearing these sins in His own body (1 Peter 2:24).

Solution: Personal faith in Christ. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).

Preparation for Studying This Book

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.

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess [acknowledge] our sins, He [God the Father] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins [known sins], and cleanse us from all unrighteousness [unknown and forgotten sins] (1 John 1:8-9).

Therefore, in order to benefit from this Bible study the following is necessary:

1. You have personally believed in Jesus Christ.
2. You have no unconfessed sin(s) in your life; otherwise, you will have minimal understanding or very little comfort from this Biblical teaching.

You have the option, this very moment, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ if you have not done so previously and wish to now. It is also the time to search our souls, to confess (name or acknowledge) our sin(s) to God the Father if we think that we are not in fellowship with Him due to unconfessed sin(s).

Let us pray: Therefore, Heavenly Father, we thank you because You are the Master Planner of human history. We pause to recognize that Jesus Christ has all the power in Heaven and on earth. We thank you for your Holy Spirit who teaches us the truths of the Bible. We are grateful to know that nothing ever eludes Your infinite knowledge. We are delighted to know that You, O God, have commanded us to give thanks to You in everything. Father we know that "everything" includes sickness, disappointments, separation from loved ones, loss of employment, even loss of loved ones. We also know that everything is not always pleasant. Nonetheless, we thank You because You know exactly what each of us is going through at this moment. We rejoice in the midst of these catastrophes knowing that Your plan for our lives is

always perfect and greater than our suffering. We are comforted to know that You, O God, our Father, understand our emotional pains, heartaches, sicknesses and all our sorrows. Father, we pray that God the Holy Spirit will guide us through this doctrinal teaching compiled from Your Word so that we can be truly comforted by reading it. This we ask in the name of the King of kings, Lord of lords, even in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.” (James 5:11)

Job at Ease

Many of us have heard about the suffering of Job. He was not singled out by God to suffer. Job was a man who, at one time in his life, personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as He was revealed in Job’s day.

Job feared God; he was blameless and upright (Job 1:1).

He was a man who, in our present day, would be classified as a multi-millionaire. He had everything going for him: a wonderful wife, beautiful children, wealth, excellent health, and great friends. He was the richest man in his kingdom (Job 1:3).

Job not only had great health, but he was consistent in learning Bible truth (Bible knowledge, Bible doctrine) into his soul as God made it available to him; therefore, he developed a capacity in his soul to be blessed by God, and God did bless him.

Through this doctrine, he came to love God dearly. To him nothing else mattered. Nothing was more important to him than his personal rapport and fellowship with God. What a glorious relationship Job had with God. Not even his health, wealth, wife, children, or friends measured up to such a relationship.

God’s Commendation of Job

God Himself gives His approval of the life of Job. People are inclined to judge others based on their outward manifestation. However, God judges the heart, the thinking of the inner person.

For God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7b).

Having all the facts, God approved his spiritual lifestyle:

The Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil’ (Job 1:8).

Let's ask ourselves some important questions based on the statements to follow. Each one can only answer for himself. If God were to evaluate our spiritual lives as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, would it look like any of the following?

Evaluation 1: "Look, there is my child who fears Me. "

Evaluation 2: "Have you noticed my child? His love for Me is more important to him than his love for the details of this life."

Evaluation 3: "He puts more emphasis on knowing My Word and growing in grace than he puts on the temporary things of this life."

Evaluation 4: "Satan, have you noticed him? He never dwells on his failures. He gets up whenever he falls and moves on toward the finish line."

Evaluation 5: "I am always the Number One Priority in his life."

Evaluation 6: "He and I (God) always have daily fellowship."

Evaluation 7: "Take everything away from him and I [God] guarantee you [Satan] that he will still be happy because he loves Me [the source of his blessings] more than he actually loves the blessings themselves."

Frankly speaking, no human being has the right to evaluate you. Only you can evaluate yourself. Your ability to do this objective evaluation is only possible in light of His Word in your soul.

By the same token neither should we evaluate others . The Bible tells us,

and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business
(1 Thessalonians 4:11).

In our next lesson we will begin our study of Job and examine how he was able to endure suffering. Until then may the Lord bless you and keep you.



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