

Comfort in Suffering

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Lesson #6

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.

In Sickness - Continued from lesson #5

In His perfect wisdom, God knows why He is permitting your sickness. When Job was struck with the most indescribable illness, he did not know why, but God did (Job 2:3-4).

God did not tell him why. He was silent, absolutely silent. It was a time for Job to demonstrate to the entire world, to the elect angels and the fallen angels, that his love for his God was greater than everything in his life, including his health.

Job knew the answer to this question: Do you?

In whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind? (Job 12:10).

Job knew that until God decided to remove him from the earth he would continue to live. What about you? Do you know that, too?

As long as God has a purpose for you on this earth, nothing can take your life away.

God is sovereign; therefore, the decision about whether you live or die is totally His. That's a nice chunk of Bible truth for your soul.

I worked in a hospital and saw many patients. I have seen patients who look like they are going to die in a day or two, but they live for many months, or even years. This also surprises physicians.

Sometimes, they predict that a patient could only survive for six months, and then the patient lives six years or even more.

Why?

Because God makes the final decision. This should be comforting to you in your sickness. Job continues:

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9, cf Leviticus 24:10-23).

I am sure that his wife must have said it in a sweet, soft manner: "Honey, curse God and let's get it over with." Neither the phrase, "for better or for worse" nor "in sickness and in health" occurred to Job's wife at this time.

Does your spouse stick around when you are suffering in sickness? If so, that is wonderful, but your comfort should still be from God who never fails you. Wives, children, and family can fail you in hard times, but God will stay by your side for all of eternity.

"I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5b).

That is the difference, and it is a great promise for you to store in your soul.

But he [Job] said to her [his wife], "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity [bad things]?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips (Job 2:10).

This is a man who truly loved God more than anything in his life, including his health. People often say, "I know how you feel." Nothing could be farther from the truth.

No one knows exactly how another person feels. One would have to be inside the soul of that person. Job's illness, as it is described in the Bible, was beyond human understanding.

In fact, his friends were stunned when they saw him.

When they [Job's friends] lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him; they raised their voices and wept; ... then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights, with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great (Job 2:12-13).

Job maintained his poise under severe suffering caused by Satan, the accuser.

Job never cursed God. Not even once.

I do not know the type of illness you might have at this time. In the light of Job's illness, have your friends visited you and sat for seven days and seven nights, stunned because of your sickness?

Today, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, do you hate or blame God for what is happening to you right now? Do you worry or are you relaxed, knowing that God in His sovereign wisdom knows exactly what you are experiencing. In your afflictions, He Himself has said:

“Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you,” (1 Peter 5:7).

Can you join Job and declare, “I know that my Redeemer lives” (Job 19:25)? And can you assert with him, “And after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:26)? He anticipated resurrection after death. Are you not looking forward to the resurrection day when our Lord Jesus Christ will give to you your very own resurrection body?

Dying Moment

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’ (1 Corinthians 15:52-54).

Nothing should be more comforting to any believer than the fact that when he dies, he is going to a place far better than this earth. But not everyone who is sick will recover. Paul puts it this way:

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21).

Why did he say this? Paul knew that when he died, he would be face to face with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8) in a place where God:

. . . will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away (Revelation 21:4).

This was Paul's hope in his suffering. This was Job's hope in his suffering and this should be your hope when you suffer. In fact, you should have no regrets.

God's timing is always based on His perfect wisdom so it is always for your BEST. "Why me, why now?" is the cry of the immature believer.

Testing in Relationships

God designed testing of any kind with our spiritual advancement and blessing in mind. No student goes into a new class without first passing all the prerequisite classes. If this is true in the human realm, how much more true it is for believers.

Testing in the area of relationships is one of the toughest.

Many people are obnoxious by nature. Believers who are out of fellowship with God will judge, malign, gossip, and even hate, others.

- How many times in your life have family members, friends, coworkers or even strangers accused you of things you never did?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you know in your heart that you are absolutely right when someone else maintains that you are wrong?
- Has anyone ever told you that the reason you are suffering is because of sin in your life?
- Has any member of your church ever said something awful about you?

All these things fall under the category of relationship testing.

As previously mentioned, there are no easy tests in life. Most likely for Job, however, this relationship testing was the most intense of all. He was really hit hard in this area. Obviously, were it not for the Word of God stored in his soul, he would not have passed the test.

Everyone has someone he leans on in times of difficulty, someone he shares his problems with and can call on in time of need. Think for a moment. How would you feel if the assaults were coming from this very person?

How would you feel if your best friends had met to accuse you of things you had not done? Job experienced this.

Job's friends attacked him from every angle. They maintained that his suffering was related to monstrous sins in his life. Again and again, they accused him of committing sin against God. You know that these accusations were not true from what you have read about Job's life so far.

Who and what should be your refuge when you are maligned, judged and unjustly accused?

We will answer this question with 4 points when our study resumes in lesson #7. Till then may the Lord bless you and keep you.