

COMFORT IN SUFFERING

by Moses C. Onwubiko

Grace Evangelistic Ministries, Inc.
Nashville, Tennessee U.S.A.

Grace Evangelistic Ministries, Inc.
P.O. Box 111999
Nashville, Tennessee 37222
www.GEMworldwide.org

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“ ‘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)



Dedication

Dedicated to Col. Robert B. Thieme Jr., a man whose unparalleled training in the original languages of the Scriptures, Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, and whose fifty plus years of devotion to doctrinal teachings from the original languages of the Scripture has enriched millions of believers in Christ across the globe.



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Introduction

At the inception of *Comfort in Suffering* I had recently been employed by Vanderbilt Hospital. While there I observed pain and suffering set against the backdrop of great care and concern. 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.



Salute to the Vanderbilt Employees

We are grateful to God for his unfailing love for us and we are also grateful to all those in the medical field who stand in the gap providing expert care and concern: the janitors, patient transport teams, service associates, nurse technicians, medical receptionists, lab technicians, nurses, pharmacy technicians, medical records personnel, pharmacists, social workers, dietitians, cooks, IV therapists, medical doctors, and all others who, without equivocation, make themselves available to serve patients at Vanderbilt Hospital. These individuals on a daily basis give of themselves, pass many sleepless nights, work extra hours when needed, and give so much more than is required helping patients who come for care, as well as family members who accompany them. I salute every one of you for your dedication. Indeed, you are the very backbone of Vanderbilt Hospital. Your contribution to the physical well-being of the patients is beyond reproach.

Above and Beyond the Call Of Duty

There are many physicians all over the world who love helping people who are physically suffering. Sometimes these doctors' services are recognized, but many times no one but God actually rewards their endeavors. In the midst of all these wonderful doctors, I want to briefly comment on one doctor whose services I have witnessed many times. I have personally observed Dr. Gritter take care of her patients. The care she gave to one particular patient, Mrs. J., was outstanding.

One afternoon, I walked into a patient's room, and there was Dr. Gritter holding Mrs. J. as if she were indeed Dr. Gritter's own mother. The sympathy on the doctor's face for this patient was very obvious. I was touched by the scene. Then I saw that the doctor's hands and jacket were covered with Mrs. J's blood. Immediately I ran to assist them.

We spent nearly one and a half hours in this patient's room trying to stop the bleeding which was coming from a reopened shunt site. The amount of blood this patient lost, in my estimation, was equal to and most likely greater than the amount of blood the patient was currently receiving intravenously. This incredible doctor put her best foot forward for this patient who was in critical condition. What comes to mind when I recall the situation is Dr. Gritter anxiously requesting, "Let's do this, let's do that, let's hold her like this, oh no, that way . . . let's put pressure here and there . . ." Mrs. J. was soon rushed to the Medical Intensive Care unit (MICU) to be watched closely.

Knowing what Mrs. J. had gone through, later the same day I went to see her in the MICU, and there was Dr. Gritter! This was a doctor who had given everything she possibly could to this patient. It was care given from the heart. Here was a doctor who had gone above and beyond the call of duty to save another's life. Dr. Gritter, I salute you for care well-given. Indeed, your service represents Vanderbilt's credo. I salute you because this is what the medical profession is all about.

Moses C. Onwubiko

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 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).

Prerequisite for Studying God's Word

There are two conditions for studying God's Word.

Condition 1: Salvation. Salvation is a grace gift from God which occurs when an individual personally puts his trust [faith] in Jesus Christ (John 3:36; 3:16).

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever [including you] believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16).

When you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter how evil you have become, God the Master, in His grace, wipes out all your sinful debts:

I, even I, am the one who wipes out [all] your transgressions [sins] for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins (Isaiah 43:25).

At that very moment, God gives you His very own righteousness—the basis for your justification. You have fellowship with God for the first time in your life.

Condition 2: Fellowship with God. The very moment a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, fellowship with the eternal and holy God becomes a reality for the first time since that individual's physical birth. When the person sins, the fellowship is lost temporarily. Bear in mind that fellowship is only temporarily lost. One's salvation is never lost. I want to set the record straight about that. God solves the problem of condemnation once and for all when one believes in Christ. Some people erroneously argue that God cannot do that. But He does. When one believes in Christ, he becomes a "gift" to our Lord Jesus Christ by God (the Giver) Himself. Jesus Christ makes this point clear:

"This is the will of Him [God the Father] who sent Me that of all He has given me I lose nothing [everyone who has believed in Christ] but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of My Father that everyone who

beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself [Jesus Christ] will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:39-40).

To make His statement or claim more graphic, He adds:

I give them [believers] eternal life, and they shall never perish, no one [not even Satan] can snatch them out of My hand (John 10:28 NIV).

If you have personally believed in Jesus Christ, regardless of your status quo (sick or well, dying or living, lying down or standing up) you are in His hand right now. His infallible promise is to raise you up on the last day. Jesus Christ is not going to raise you up because of who you are, but because of who He is (the faithful One). Jesus meant what He said:

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:35 NIV).

What are His words? Among other things they include the following promises:

1. To give you eternal life (John 10:28)
2. Not to lose you (John 6:39)
3. To raise you on the last day (John 6:40)

This concept might disappoint many legalistic believers—the self-righteous and the self-centered individuals—who tend to water down the grace of God. But He, who never falls back on His word, will display a firework-like resurrection of all who at one time in their lives have personally believed in Him. How fabulous will that glorious day be! I look forward to the resurrection of the church. I look forward to seeing at the resurrection those whom the legalistic believers assumed to be disqualified. I also anticipate seeing the self-righteous believers in heaven despite the fact that as ambassadors for Christ they had misrepresented our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed this is the meaning of God’s grace for none of us deserves to go to Heaven.

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).



For Those Who Have Believed

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).

Preparation for Studying This Book

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 doctrine 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 doctrine.

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 Bible doctrine. 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. He feared God (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 taking 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 doctrine 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 the Bible doctrine in your soul. Can God say about you:

“There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil”
(Job 1:8)?

Let us explain two or three things from this verse.

1. “Blameless” here means that Job possessed God’s perfect righteousness. This was given to him at the point when he put his faith in the Lord. This is always the basis for one’s justification (Romans 3:28, Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:1-3, 3:19-28). When the resurrection of the Old Testament believers takes place, Job will stand before God blameless, not because of what he did (Titus 3:5, Ephesians 2:8-9), but because of what the grace of God did.
2. “Upright” means integrity. Job, through the daily intake of Bible doctrine, as God revealed it to him, developed a foundation on which his *modus vivendi* [way of thinking] and *modus operandi* [way of doing things] was built.
3. “Fears God and shuns evil.” This phrase speaks for itself. It does not need much explanation. Job “fears God and shuns evil;” it is that simple.

One day, without warning, without Job’s anticipation, but with God’s permission (Job 1:12), Satan and his officers emptied their ammunition on Job. You see, the righteous suffer, too. There is no need to ask, “why me?” in your difficult situation(s). Everyone suffers.

Job on the Witness Stand

Satan accused Job by telling God that Job's faithfulness to God was based on Job's prosperity, not on his love for God. Satan's chief objective was to prove to God that no man would worship Him apart from His blessings. In essence, Satan is saying, "God, You are bribing people to worship You by blessing them."

In the book of Job, chapter one, we are told that Satan went to God in Heaven (Job 1:6).

Why did he go before the Supreme Court of Heaven? To ask God to lengthen Job's life? Of course not. He was there in court to present a false case against Job (Job 1:9-12). Satan did not know that his case was destined to fail, but God knew. God knew because He is an omniscient (all-knowing) God. He knows the past just as He knows the present and the future. This brings us to these important principles.

Principle 1: Since God knows the past, the present, and the future, that means in His perfect knowledge He already knows the outcome of whatever He allows to happen.

Principle 2: Since God is perfect, the outcome of whatever He allows to happen must always be splendid, reflecting His perfect character.

Principle 3: Therefore, whatever God allows to happen to His child, He already knows that the result will bring blessing to the individual and glory to Himself.

Principle 4: Therefore, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who is growing in grace should not question God about the things He does; rather, the child of God should join the apostle Paul in accepting this fact:

And we know that God causes all things [including physical and mental suffering] to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

“Those who love God” refers to believers who, through their daily intake of Bible doctrine, have developed gratitude in their soul from which personal love for God becomes a reality.

Obviously, we are in God’s plan not because of our own efforts but because of His grace. That is comforting if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who is growing in grace through daily intake of Bible doctrine—Bible truth. You are on target if this is your motto: “God knows what He is doing.” If you are sick right now, He knows why. If your loved one has left you, God also knows why. “All things work together for good” (Romans 8:28). “All things” include “ALL THINGS.”

In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

We know that everything is not always pleasant. There is nothing pleasant about being sick, about loss of employment, loss of loved ones or losing everything you have. God wants you to say, “Thank you, God.” Can you truly say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:12)? That’s another way of saying, “Thank you, God” when you have been hit pretty hard with suffering.

Satan Obtains Testing Permission From God

Then Satan answered the Lord, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face” (Job 1:9-11).

Here’s the permission:

Then the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not put forth your hand on him [literally do not take his life].” So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord (Job 1:12).

Can you imagine that Satan has the audacity to be sarcastic in the courtroom of a holy and a mighty God? He said:

“Does Job fear God for nothing? But put forth Your hand [God] now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face” (Job 1:9, 11).

What an insult to God! You see, Satan is not omniscient, so he doesn’t know what Job will do if he is tested; however, God does know. That is the difference! Did you see what Satan actually said to God?

He will surely curse You to Your face (Job 1:11b).

The question is, would Job do that? Or better, would you do that? Would you curse God to His face if you were tested with the things Job was?

In these three verses above, there are important lessons to be learned.

Lesson 1:

Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is under maximum protection from God Himself. Satan knows that, too. Do you? Satan declares:

“Have You [God] not made a hedge [impassible wall] about him?” (Job 1:10a).

Lesson 2:

Whatever you have as a believer is under God’s constant care—24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. That means as long as you are in God’s plan, in God’s will, your possessions are under the most security that Heaven can offer. Satan acknowledged that too.

Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side (Job 1:10a)?

Lesson 3:

Your prosperity, which could be in the area of finances, marriage, friendship, or any other area of life, is a matter of God’s provision and His grace. The great apostle Paul recognized this grace principle:

What did you have that you did not receive (1 Corinthians 4:7)? [Satan also said:] You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land (Job 1:10b).

Lesson 4:

Therefore our comfort should be based on the solid fact that God is in control of not only our daily lives, but of the things around us.

Lesson 5:

God permits testing. His permission is based on His sovereign knowledge.

Lesson 6:

Therefore Satan does not have what it takes to remove us from this life apart from God’s sovereign will and purpose (Job 1:12).

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. Do you see why 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 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 only the Bible doctrine in his soul. "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.

Job did not hear God’s voice during these severe tests. Job was not perfect; he could not understand why he was suffering. He failed once in a while, yet he never allowed his failures to lure his love and attention away from the Lord. That is the beauty of Job’s spiritual lifestyle. He never stayed down when he fell.

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 was not only describing himself in this verse, but also the attitude of Job.

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 (1 Corinthians 4:9). They are watching every action, every word, and every step we take. 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.

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 21:26). 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.

Job and His Children Under Fire

The suffering of Job in relation to his family can be classified in two categories: his children and 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 descendants 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 (Isaiah 14:12). 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 taking in Bible doctrine? 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 Bible doctrine so lightly that when testing comes their way they disappoint the Lord Jesus Christ. Job was always ready. An accumulation of Bible doctrine 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 doctrine 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.

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.

Well, Job did not curse God. Do you remember the story of Adam and Eve? Satan tried this method first when he used Eve to get to Adam. But this time, the power of Bible doctrine residing in Job’s “stream of consciousness” was greater than the test. His love

for His God was superior. Can your spouse turn you against God? If you are suffering in this area today, can you relax and know that God knows what is happening? If you truly love God, can you say:

And we [I] know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28a).

If you can say this, then it is the grace of God that has allowed you to be: “fixing our [your] eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of [your] faith” (Hebrew 12:2a) knowing that He knows how He can turn your situation around for His own glory. We are here for God’s glory.

Job’s Wealth Under Siege

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.” So that we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper I will not be afraid; what will man [Satan] do to me?” (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Many people, including believers in Christ, have become so much in love with money that their entire lives are centered around making even more money. They go to churches that tell them, “Give, and God will double your bank account, for the more you give, the more the Lord will give you” as if God is in the money-making business. “Give ten dollars and you will get twenty.” I wish that such a sermon was Biblical, because if it were, I would not be working today. I would go to the bank, borrow ten thousand dollars, give it to the church, and wait for twenty thousand dollars from God! I would be a trillionaire by now. If this was true, there would never be a verses like,

But by the grace of God I am what I am (1 Corinthians 15:10a).

... What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it [as a gift]? (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Everything we have from God is because of His grace. Indeed, Job was a man of great wealth (Job 1:3). He was the richest man in his kingdom and one who always kept his personal love for God at a distance from his attitude toward his wealth. In that sense, he fulfilled the principle:

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money (Hebrews 13:5a).

Job understood that whatever prosperity he had, was from God. "The Lord gave ..." (Job 1:21b), he acknowledged.

I once asked a man, "Why do you need money so badly?" His response was, "Well, I want to buy a mansion."

"And then what?"

"I want to buy a boat."

"And what next?" I asked.

"Then I will buy everything that money can buy."

"Then what?" He had run out of answers. Why? Because he was confused. He never said he would try to buy happiness. Money cannot buy happiness. Therefore, when one pursues money as their source of happiness, passing tests in the area of prosperity becomes extremely difficult. Mansions will come and go, beautiful cars will come and go, whatever money can buy will come and go.

... but the word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8b).

This means that if you have God's Word in your soul, it is all that will remain when other things are taken away.

Job passed the prosperity test when everything he owned was destroyed. Satan took away everything Job had but Satan could not reach Job's soul. Therefore, Job was able to draw on the Bible doctrine stored in his soul and still fulfill the principle:

In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Job's confidence was in his God and not in his wealth. He knew that God, who had provided in the past, could replace Job's wealth if God chose to do so. He also knew that God, who was the source of Job's blessings, could never be taken away from him. And that was the difference in Job's life. That can be the difference in your life, too, as you face testing in your life today, or in the future.

In Sickness

No one wants to be sick. I know what it is like to be sick. Illness is not something to be taken lightly; however, whether you are sick or healthy, the Lord Himself said:

“Lo, I am with you even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20b).

This should be a great comfort to you in your sickness.

The disease Job suffered from was an unusual one. Satan intended to physically wipe him out. With God's permission, the only thing that Satan left for Job was his very breath. Job's body was tortured beyond recognition.

Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes (Job 2:7-8).

Until it happened, Job had no idea that he was to suffer so intensely. The question is, did God know what His obedient child was going through? Of course He did. He knew what was going to happen to Job since the beginning of time. Nothing ever eludes His infinite knowledge. God is sovereign, so whatever He allows to happen, He does based on His perfect knowledge. He understands every pain and every weakness that you have or ever will have. If you are sick now, it is not an accident. God knew how you would suffer even before you were born. In fact, there is no such thing as “an accident” or “a coincidence” or “luck” where

God is concerned. To accept any of these things is to accept the fact that God is not in perfect control of human history. In essence, you are saying that something awful (or so called bad luck) has come to you without God noticing, or that something good (or so-called good luck) has mistakenly eluded God and come to you.

In His perfect wisdom, God also 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:

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

Do you? 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 doctrine 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. 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, co-workers 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?

1. Go to the Word of God in your mind, your "stream of consciousness." "For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword ... " (Hebrews 4:12a). Nothing is more powerful than God's Word. With it you can fend off any attack in your soul and still maintain your poise.

2. Give the matter to God and leave it for Him to settle. Why? Because only God understands the whole situation, and trying to get revenge on your accuser only makes the problem worse. Every normal person knows that two wrongs do not make a right. God commands that we do not take revenge (Romans 12:19).
3. Confide in God rather than in man. Why? Because man may turn against you, but God never changes (Malachi 3:6).
4. Remember that you are here on earth to glorify God and not yourself.

Once in a while Job stumbled. Why? Because he was human. The only difference is that he never allowed his failures to keep him from pushing forward to glorify God. As a believer, you will fail. Will you allow your failures to keep you from fulfilling God's plan for your life? Or will you get up, get back into fellowship with God and keep moving in the power of the Holy Spirit until the race is over? (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

The Last Days of Job

It may interest you to know that after Job's last test was complete, the Bible never says that Satan went back to Heaven to admit to God that He was right after all. However, the final chapters of the book of Job are focused on God's justice. In the end, God finally broke His silence. As a reward for Job's faithfulness during his suffering, God doubled everything Job previously had. Job lived to enjoy life even more because God crowned him in glory. God is the same. He changes not (Malachi 3:6). That means that what He did for Job because Job glorified Him to the maximum, He can do for you if you will take up the whole armor given to you in the word of God and defend your ground (Ephesians 6:10-18). He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Lessons and Applications

Lesson 1. God knows exactly what you are going through right now. If you have personally believed in Jesus Christ, you are also a child of God. Therefore, your comfort should not only rest on the fact that God knows who you are, where you are, and what you are going through, but also that He is in charge of your life. You are kept by His power (1 Peter 1:5).

Lesson 2. If you know that you are doing what He has commanded you to do [taking in His word and growing in grace] (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18), then you have the privilege of claiming His promises in the midst of your suffering.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God [those who obey Him], to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

Lesson 3. If you are in the plan of God, Satan cannot get hold of you in any way without God's sovereign permission (Job 1:10, 12). And when God does permit, He does so for the purpose of blessing you as well as bringing glory to Himself. Therefore, in your suffering, be ready to use the Bible doctrine in your soul to the glory of God.

Lesson 4. God knows your strength. He knows what you are able to bear.

No temptation [suffering] has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able (1 Corinthians 10:13a).

Lesson 5. No believer should rely on the details of this life as a source of happiness. The details of this life will pass away, but the word of God stands forever.

The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the Word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8).

Application: When your happiness does not depend on your wealth, children, success, or anything else outside of God, then if and when these things are taken away from you, you will not be devastated. In addition, you have a better opportunity to join Job in saying,

“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21b).

The Comforting Promises of God

There are about 7,000 promises of God in the Bible for you to claim. They belong to you. You can claim them through faith.

In your suffering He has said:

- *Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning (Psalm 30:5b).*
- *Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).*
- *Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).*
- *... for He Himself has said, “I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5b).*
- *Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me (Psalm 50:15).*
- *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe (Proverbs 18:10).*

- *Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous [righteous through faith in Christ] to be shaken (Psalm 55:22).*
- *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want (Psalm 23:1).*
- *How blessed are all who take refuge in Him! (Psalm 2:12b).*
- *Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know (Jeremiah 33:3).*
- *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phillipians 4:6-7).*
- *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you (John 15:7).*
- *If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it (John 14:14).*
- *And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive (Matthew 21:22).*
- *I, even I, am He who comforts you (Isaiah 51:12a).*
- *The eternal God is a dwelling place, And underneath are the everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27).*
- *The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You (Isaiah 26:3).*
- *Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock (Isaiah 26:4).*
- *Wait for the Lord; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes wait for the Lord (Psalm 27:14).*
- *And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phillipians 4:19).*

No matter what you suffer now as a believer one thing is sure:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

And at last:

and He [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).

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man [physical body] is decaying, yet our inner man [soul] is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction [sufferings] is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison (2 Corinthians 4:16-17).

Such is the confidence (hope) of all who are in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior.



Therefore, Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me the privilege of reading through this doctrinal teaching. Father, only You know what I am going through at this time. You know whether I am lying down sick, or whether I am dying of an incurable disease; You also know whether I have recently lost a loved one; You know whether I am facing the most difficult suffering of my life. God, I pray that the doctrine from this material may be a source of comfort to me. This I pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Notes

Notes

Buy Truth, and Do Not Sell It

(Proverbs 23:23a)

Are you aware that sound Bible teaching is a precious and priceless piece of spiritual jewelry? Indeed, church history has shown how difficult sound teaching is to come by, especially in modern day Christianity! So, when God from His oasis of grace leads us to the pearls of truth in His infallible and inerrant Word, we ought to cherish them without reserve. The Bible is the treasure box that holds your capacity to enjoy abundant life, to reap maximum happiness in life, friendship, marriage, business, and to enjoy unprecedented blessings for today and tomorrow; therefore, “buy truth” [stay grounded in the Word] “for wisdom is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her” (Proverbs 8:11).

Truth: For you are not under law BUT under GRACE (Romans 6:14b).