

# TURNING THE CURSE INTO A BLESSING

*A Message of Triumph From the Book of Job*

**Paul G. Caram, Ph.D.**



Coping With the Stresses of Life

Understanding the Benefits of Adversity

Passing Our Tests in Order to Defeat Satan

Preparing Ourselves to Rule and Reign With Christ

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## DEDICATION

With deep gratitude and loving esteem, this *Christian Maturity Series* is dedicated to the honorable

**Brian J. Bailey**

**President of Zion Fellowship International**

my spiritual father and able teacher from my youth in the sacred mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, whose exemplary life and ministry have inspired my love for Christ and His Truth; who has always been to me, and to all of us who know him, the ideal Christian gentleman, irreproachable and charitable. And above all, he is a man approved of God, a man to whom God shows His face!

**“Our God  
Turned the Curse  
into a Blessing”**

(Nehemiah 13:2b)

# TURNING THE CURSE INTO A BLESSING

## Trouble—Our Servant

God has ordained *trouble* to be our servant! In fact, the harder and more vehemently our enemy works, the harder he is pushing us to the top, to the throne. Nagging irritations, injustices, painful delays, and even childhood traumas, can all be turned around by God to work in our favor. Trouble is often God's gift to us. It is a sacred treasure. Such was the case in the life of Joseph. All of the cruelties committed against Joseph by his older brothers pushed him to the throne in Egypt. The same is true in the life of Job. All of his trouble ended with *a double portion* and eternal honor. Trouble is meant to be our servant. Our God is able to “turn the curse into a blessing” when we please Him (Neh.13:2b).

### “Cursed is the Ground For Thy Sake”

Because of the fall, God had to pronounce the curse to restrain a fallen nature (Gen. 3:16-19; 5:29). The curse was the mercy of God to fallen man and it involved *pain, toil, and much adversity*. God knows what depraved man will do when he is not held in check (Ecc. 8:11, Psa. 73:3-6, Ezek. 22:8).

When the curse has accomplished all of its work, God will remove it (Rev. 22:3). Sometimes God allows a lingering *thorn* or problem in our lives until a certain work of grace is performed or something obstinate changes. Then He removes it. This was the case in the life of Job. Paul needed a thorn to keep him on course (2 Cor.12:6-9). Just as a pearl is formed by *irritation*, sometimes a very aggravating situation is prolonged by God to accomplish something beautiful in our lives.

Since the transgression in the Garden of Eden, God has had to work through man's failures, and engineer another plan for the human race. Man chose a hard path when he transgressed (Prov.13:15). God had to *reroute* man after the fall, and it has never been an easy road since. The imposed curse of Genesis 3:16-19 has four main objectives:

- 1.) To restrain a rampant, fallen nature
- 2.) To keep man on course
- 3.) To teach man about God, and the ways of God
- 4.) To destroy the fallen nature at death, so that man can be raised incorruptible and sinless

### Trouble - An Opportunity For New Grace

Because of man's downfall by disobedience, God had to curse the ground for man's sake. Yet the curse (and all of its hardships and afflictions) creates an *opportunity* for God to develop divine qualities in man. Mercy, longsuffering, meekness, true love, faith, loyalty, forbearance, and many other virtues are developed by adversity. Of necessity, man must have pain, sorrow, toil, and pressure. Even the fact that man can die is God's mercy, for in death the nature of sin is destroyed in the members of our body and we can be resurrected with a sinless body. However, we must be careful not to die before our time. God uses the curse ultimately to bless us. When a problem or enemy has served its purpose, God will deliver us from it.

## Purpose of Trouble

We were born to be tested (Job 7:17-18). God has set His heart upon man, and is testing us every moment. Trouble has an uncanny way of revealing who we are and what our real needs are. The passing or failing of our tests determines our eternal position in heaven. Often we do not know when we are being tested. Therefore, we should be more conscious of the fact that we are being watched. We are a spectacle of men and angels. We are under the scrutiny of principalities and powers and the world, but most of all—of the Lord Himself.

*God Tests us:*

- To see of what we are made.
- To see what our motives are, and what our needs are.
- To see if God is *number one* in our lives (Gen. 22:1-2; Job 1:8-12; Deut. 13:1-3).
- To see if we are worthy of the promises of God, and loyal to the truths He has entrusted to us.
- To see if we are able to receive the power we have asked of God. (The greater the power we want to receive from God, the greater will be our tests.)
- To see if we are worthy to take the positions Satan and his followers have forfeited.
- To see if we qualify to be His Bride, and to be at the marriage feast. (Rev.19:9)
- To see if we qualify to be in the first resurrection, judge angels, and rule and reign with Christ.
- To see if we are only serving God for blessings and prestige, or simply because we love Him.
- To make us more righteous and holy.
- To bring a greater revelation of the Lord to our lives.
- To bless our latter end, to exalt us, and give us an eternal name.
- To bring new grace into our lives by being in a new low place. (Grace is given to the *lowly*.)
- To give God an answer which, in turn, He may give to His adversaries. (Prov. 27:11; Psa.119:42)

### The Church Has a Wrong Concept of Life and of Trouble

We were created for God. God was not created for us. We were made to be the servants of God, He is not to be our servant. Instead of telling God what *we* want, we should ask God what He wants. Much of today's Gospel is a welfare Gospel and it produces a welfare mentality in the Church. “What is in this *for me*? How much can I get out of this *for myself*? What is the minimum amount of sacrifice necessary in order to receive the maximum return *for myself*?” These attitudes are symptomatic of a malady we term *convenient Christianity*.

### The Quickest Way Out of My Troubles / Little Desire For a Changed Life

Today's “gospel of welfare” is a mentality that is preached from many pulpits. It *uses* God as a means of getting one's needs and wants met, while producing little concern for doing the will of God and having the heart changed. It is a *something for nothing* proposition. It offers free pardon (freedom from guilt), free medical benefits (divine healing), free provision (freedom from financial pressure), and freedom from depression and sorrow. And let there be no mistake about it, God *loves* to generously bestow all of these gifts upon His people to encourage them and to help them along life's difficult pathway. Yet all of these, though they are benefits of the Gospel, are not *ultimates*.

*Introduction b*

## **Not Temporal Blessings But a Changed Life**

God's intention for His people has never been to *camp* around temporal blessings. Instead, He is more interested in what we *become* and in what we will allow Him to do in our lives. The whole object of Christianity is to be transformed and suited *for Him* for all eternity. This requires *change*; thus, it is not always the easiest path. Therefore, a Gospel that promotes ease, comfort, convenience, a quick answer, and the fastest way out of unpleasant circumstances, is not the true gospel. It is, however, a *popular* Gospel.

The supreme purpose of creation is based upon marriage. God purposed to fashion in the earth a mature bride who could intimately know and understand Him (Jer. 9:24). He desired one compatible to Himself, someone on His level. The Lord looks for a bride who loves Him, not just for the blessings or for what she can grasp for herself, but one who loves Him just for who He is! Otherwise God has on His hands a selfish, self-centered, self-seeking little child. This is precisely what a shallow Gospel produces. Contrariwise, the end result of a Gospel that reveals the *true cost* of being a real Christian is a glorious bride without spot or blemish.

## **The Age-Old Controversy**

Therefore, we are confronted with a controversy as old as man. Many years ago Satan accused Job of only serving God for the benefits. Satan charged, "Job is only serving you because you have prospered him; take away all his blessings and he will curse you to your face." In effect, Satan was saying—"Job has ulterior motives. He is only *using* God for his own selfish interests!" Unfortunately, the accusation Satan hurled at Job is true of some believers, for we find in John 6:26-27 that multitudes followed Jesus *only* because He was meeting their material needs. Most of them deserted Him when the tests of life came.

## **Passing the Tests That Satan Failed**

Ironically, Satan's accusation against Job was an indictment against himself, for upon this very issue he himself had failed miserably (Rom. 2:1). Lucifer only served the Lord as long as everyone was praising him and standing in awe of his beauty. He possessed charm, wisdom, charisma, and musical abilities that were unequalled. He was the talk of heaven! Was he thankful for all of this? No! All he wanted was more—more *for himself!* When God was forced to demote him for his folly and pride, was Lucifer sorry or repentant in any way for the grief and shame he had brought to his Lord? Not at all! He was sorry *only* for his loss of position, power, and praise. It is obvious that he was only serving God for the blessings; for when God removed the blessings, he "cursed God to his face!" Therefore, we must come face to face with this fact—if we are ever going to defeat Satan, we have to pass the tests that he failed!

The Lord also tested Abraham. Was God number one in his life, or were the promises and blessings? When Abraham willingly offered Isaac back to God, it was not only a testimony to God, but also to Satan. For we are, as Paul says in First Corinthians 4:9, "a spectacle of men and angels." Satan and all the evil spirits are carefully examining our motives, looking for an occasion to find fault because they know that some of us are destined to displace them and claim what they have forfeited. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we succeed where they failed. Otherwise, we will not be worthy to take possession of what they have lost through rebellion.

## **“An Answer to Him Who Reproaches Me”**

Proverbs 27:11 cries out: “*My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.*” God is earnestly searching throughout the whole world for a man or woman whose heart is perfect toward Him (2 Chron. 16:9). He does so for several reasons. For one thing, God has an enemy who relentlessly accuses the brethren day and night (Rev. 12:10). Furthermore, the adversary reproaches the Lord Himself. In the first chapter of the book of Job, Satan charges that no one serves the Lord because he *loves* Him, but only for selfish purposes.

Therefore, Job dealt a severe blow to Satan by falling down in worship unto the Lord after losing everything he had. By this action, he proved Satan wrong (Job 1:20-22)! But also, in passing this most difficult test, Job provided God with *an answer* for His adversary! God was able to say to Satan—“Here is a man who maintains his integrity and continues to worship and love Me, even when he has been stripped of all his blessings!” Thus, Job gave God an answer to reply to Satan, the adversary who reproached Him.

### **Right Response to Injury—Spare us From the Pit**

Also, Job's *right response to injury* saved him from sliding down into a mental / emotional *pit*. Nearly all mental and emotional disorders (suicide included) are the result of a *wrong response* to a severe injury. Job's “sacrifice of thanksgiving” after losing everything he had turned his disaster into triumph. This is, by far, one of the greatest keys to victory in the Christian life. Therefore, Job's example gives us a message to live by, not just for today, but for every day of our lives. Also, his expectations were placed in God, not in the things he had just lost (see Psalm 62:5).

### **The Call to Judge Angels**

“*Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?*” (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

The high calling of the Church is to judge fallen angels, demons, and Satan, and also to rule the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:26-27). However, the man or woman who would rule the nations, must first learn to rule his own spirit as Job did (Prov. 16:32). In order to dislodge Satan and replace him, we must have passing grades where he failed. Therefore, you and I are in a training camp right now. We are being disciplined, corrected, and even chastened by God in order to qualify for the *conditional* promises He has made to His people (Heb. 10:36; 12:5-11). I want to stress that God's promises have conditions. This is a truth that is not properly understood in the Church today.

Paul told the Corinthian church that they were called, not only to judge the world, but also to judge angels! However, at the same time he said, “you [presently] are unworthy to judge the smallest matters” (1 Cor. 6:2). Paul termed them *carnal*, and *babes*, because they were bickering and taking one another to court. Paul exhorted them to grow up, to be cleansed from the filthiness of the flesh and mind, and to be perfected in holiness and in the fear of God. Otherwise they would *not* inherit the promises. (see 2 Cor. 7:1).



## Job—An End Time Book

Job had a vision of the second coming of Christ, the resurrection, and the millennial age. As a matter of fact, he even saw *himself* resurrected and ruling with Christ in the age to come (Job 19:25-27). According to Revelation 5:9-10; 20:6, it is those who have been *made* into kings and priests who will reign with Christ on the earth. Kings and priests are not born, they are *made*.

Job symbolizes the man or woman who is being formed and fitted *by adversity* into a king and priest. He is sometimes referred to as “The Millennium Saint.” Job is representative of righteous saints who are being tried in the fire to be made even more righteous and holy in order to rule and reign with Christ. Therefore the Book of Job, though it has a message for every generation, it is especially a message for our days. For we are now living in the days of the coming of Christ, the resurrection, and the thousand-year reign of Christ upon the earth. Thus, Job's message is for the last-day Church; for within the pages of the Book of Job are the keys for being made ready for the coming of the Son of man, and the Millennial age.

### TROUBLE—OUR SERVANT

- God has ordained *trouble* to be our servant—if we respond to trouble with wisdom.
- Trouble is often a gift from God, a sacred treasure.
- Trouble gets our attention and provides opportunities for us to change.
- Adversity literally pushes dedicated men and women to the top—to the throne.
- God instituted the Curse (Gen. 3:16-19) only to show mercy to fallen man.
- Sometimes a problem is *prolonged* until a certain work of grace is done in our lives.
- When a thorn has accomplished its work, God will remove it (Rev. 22:3).
- We were born to be tested.
- Trouble has a peculiar way of revealing who we are, and what our real needs are.
- The Church often does not understand the purpose for trouble.
- Many believers only serve God for what they can get for themselves—a welfare mentality.
- Temporal blessings are emphasized, with little concern for having the heart changed.
- Character is always related to pain. It means choosing right, even when it hurts.
- Unless we pass the tests that Satan failed, we cannot claim what he forfeited by rebellion.
- Right response to injury is the key to good spiritual, mental, and emotional health.
- Trouble will make us *better* or *bitter*. The choice is ours to make, by grace.
- Job represents a righteous believer who is being tested in the fire to become even more righteous and holy. He is being qualified to rule and reign with Christ.  
Therefore, he is our example.

## QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED IN THIS STUDY:

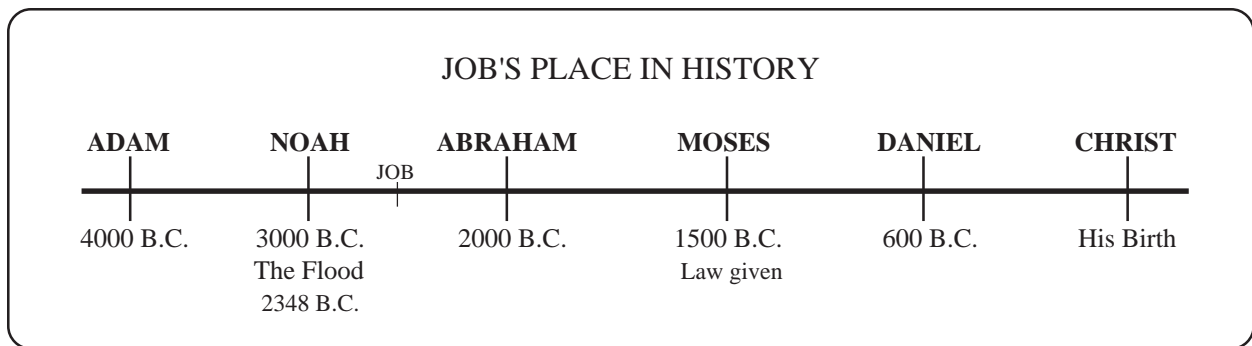
- Why did God allow a good man like Job to suffer such trouble for a season?
- What is the purpose of adversity when Christ has already borne our griefs and sorrows?
- How can we answer some of the “whys” of Job?
- Are the principles in the Book of Job for the Old Testament age only, or are they also for today?
- How do we approach someone who is in great pain?
- Ultimately, who was the author of Job’s trial?
- Did Job’s trial come as a result of some sin in his life, or some negative confession?
- Did Job ever complain about Satan during his trial?
- Did Job’s friends give him the right counsel, the wrong counsel, or both?
- What is the main theme of the book?
- Is Job a parable as some have supposed, or did it really happen?
- Did Elihu (a fourth man) give the right counsel? Did God back up what Elihu said?
- Why did God ask Job eighty questions in Chapters 38-42?
- What particular message was God working into Job during his trial?
- What are some of the lessons we learn about Satan in the Book of Job?
- Does God suffer when we are suffering?
- Why did God institute the “curse” after man fell?
- How does God turn *the curse* into a blessing?
- Why is it wrong to say, “It’s not fair!”?
- Why is it important to understand the purposes for irritations in our lives?
- What is the balance between today's “prosperity” message and suffering with Christ?
- Should we *always* accept every problem that comes into our lives as God’s will?
- What is the way to receiving a double portion?

## HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF JOB

Job is not only the oldest book in the Bible, it is probably the oldest piece of literature on earth. It is about 4000 years old. Job was written not long after Noah's flood, but presumably before Abraham. Thus, it was written before 2000 B.C. Job 8:8-9 mentions *the former age*, the era before the flood when man lived to be hundreds of years old. In Job's time, men's years were "but a shadow" compared to the period prior to the flood. After the flood, man's life expectancy dropped drastically, and we are left with the impression that the pre-flood era was not very far removed from Job's generation.

**AUTHOR:** There is uncertainty as to the authorship of the Book of Job but it is highly probable that it was Elihu, a fourth friend. Elihu, at one point, seems to be the one telling the story (cf. 32:15-16). He had more insight than the other brethren. Also he possessed a heavenly perspective of the trial.

The Book of Job is no mere parable! Job was a real man, in fact, one of the greatest men of all time. God compared him with Noah and Daniel for integrity (cf. Ezek.14:14-20). In the New Testament Job is cited for his example of patience while suffering affliction (Jas. 5:10-11). God tells us to look at Job and consider *the end* of a trial (Read also Deut. 8:16; Heb.12:5-7;12:11). In addition to the moral lessons to be learned in Job, the book also sheds remarkable light on the philosophic breadth and intellectual culture of the patriarchal age.



**LIFE AND TIMES OF JOB**—Job lived sometime after the flood, but probably before Abraham. After the flood Noah lived another 350 years, and would have been alive at the same time as Job. Genesis chapters 9, 10, and 11 cover the period after the flood to Abraham.

The earth rapidly repopulated after the flood and very quickly turned away from God. Is this not the story of man since the beginning of time? Man is prone to wander away from God, even when he knows what is right! (Read Genesis chapter 11.) At Babel they started a new form of worship by building a tower. This tower was used for the worship of the planets, and especially the moon. God came down and confused their languages, dispersing them into the countries of the world. At the same time, God also changed the *races* and nationalities.

Life expectancy was greatly reduced after the flood. Before the flood, God had extended long life for the purpose of accumulating knowledge because man had to learn everything from level one. (Note: Man never had to discover fire! Discovery of fire is only a myth created by the atheists.) After the flood man did *not* have to learn everything from the beginning. On the ark Noah undoubtedly had numerous books, and knowledge of many ingenious inventions.

Man was extremely brilliant, even in Job's time. This is evidenced by many of the conversations between Job and his friends. They understood nature, science, the stars, and they had an amazing knowledge of God and His ways. Earliest man understood music, metal forging, and built cities to dwell in (Gen. 4:17-22).

Isaiah 41:4—“Calling the generations from the beginning.” Isaiah indicates that God has a *specific* purpose and message for every generation. Job's generation was no exception! God perfected a special message in Job, declaring it not only to Job's generation, but to every succeeding one, too. That message, developed four thousand years ago, is what this book is all about!

## **JOB—THE MAN**

### **Job—A Misunderstood Man**

Job is a very misunderstood book. The man himself is a very misunderstood Bible character. In order to understand Job (or any other spiritual issue) we must always approach it in *the spirit of humility*. The Book of Job contradicts much of today's theology! Is our spiritual enlightenment as superior as we assume it is? Is the Church of today any more discerning of God's ways than Job's brethren were four thousand years ago? They declared most emphatically that when you do right and believe the promises of God, everything in life will run smoothly; but if you do evil everything will be contrary. The Book of Job upsets this concept! Here we are presented with one of God's most righteous servants, and yet everything went wrong for him . . . at least for awhile.

### A Misinterpreted Verse

One of the most abused verses in the Bible is Job 3:25. Job cried out: “For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.” It is commonly taught today that because Job had been meditating on and confessing some negative thoughts and fears, it opened the door for Satan to get in and bring all these catastrophes upon himself and his family. This, however, is found to be quite unwarranted when we look into chapter one to see how the trial had its onset. In chapter one God brought up the subject of Job, not Satan. God wished to test this remarkable man. The Lord Himself created the setting of this trial by praising Job, thus provoking Satan to jealousy. This stirred up the adversary to ask for permission to strip Job of all his blessings. Job's trial, therefore, was the result of a conversation between God and Satan, not Job's negative confession! Yes, the trial was the result of a “removed hedge.” However, it was not Job's fears that removed the hedge, but it was God's permission for Satan to test Job that removed the hedge!

“*The thing I greatly feared is come upon me.*” As we look more closely at Job's comments in 3:25, we should see more clearly that this passage simply indicates that Job had been *previously warned* about his upcoming trial. Should this surprise us? After all, Job had a close walk with the Lord and he knew the secrets of the Lord (29:4). It does not seem unusual at all that the Lord should prepare Job by speaking to him about an oncoming trial. Job did not know *when, where, or how*, nor did he understand all the details. He knew a trial of great magnitude was coming and when it finally arrived he cried out—“That which I greatly feared is come.” God is very gracious and grants foreknowledge to His servants when He knows they need it! God will show us the future when He knows it will help us (Jn.14:29). *Understanding* fortifies us to bear up under the pressure of the storms of life.

## Job—A Visionary Man

Job had visions of the second coming of Christ, the first resurrection, and the millennial age (Job 19:25-27). Job had personal promises from God that he himself would participate in this resurrection and literally see the Lord during the millennium. With such promises, he lived a holy life. He “feared the Lord and shunned evil” (1:1). Job was seized with a sense of destiny for his life and this urged him to live circumspectly.

## Job—A Righteous Man

Job represents a righteous man who is being further trained and purified *by adversity* in order to qualify for a better resurrection, and to rule and reign with Christ. Not every Christian participates in this (Rev. 20:6). Only those who are *holy* will reign. The Corinthians, for example, were not ready to reign with Christ at the time Paul wrote to them. Paul describes them as *carnal*, and *babes*, and not cleansed from the lusts of the flesh. They were *forgiven* but not mature.

## An Overview of Job's Life

As you read the book of Job, observe which portions are devoted to Job *before* his trial. (Especially consider chapters 1, 29, and 31 for Job's background.) How did he live and what kind of man was he before his trial? Job's spiritual roots must have gone down a long way. He must have had unusual promises from God to have ever endured such a trial. Great men have special *keys* in their lives that have made them outstanding in their field.

- A. JOB BEFORE HIS TRIAL — Here we see his youth, his reputation, character, and vision.
- B. JOB DURING HIS TRIAL — God was making him even more righteous and holy.
- C. JOB AFTER HIS TRIAL — He received a double portion, honor, and an eternal name.

### JOB WAS ABOUT TO BE TESTED IN SEVEN WAYS

- **ECONOMICALLY.** . . . He was about to lose everything (possessions, business, employees).
- **DOMESTICALLY.** . . . His children would die in a violent storm; his wife would turn against him.
- **PHYSICALLY** . . . . . His body would be stricken with great pain and boils.
- **SOCIALLY.** . . . . . Relatives and closest friends would misjudge and forsake him.
  - Regional people would despise and speak against him.
  - His honorable reputation would be temporarily destroyed.
- **MENTALLY.** . . . . . He was going to be very confused.
- **EMOTIONALLY.** . . . . He would be depressed. Circumstances would seem hopeless in the natural.
- **SPIRITUALLY.** . . . . . God was going to be silent for long months.

## THE NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING

The “spirit of understanding” is one of the seven spirits of the Lord mentioned in Isaiah 11:2-3. Understanding means: *To comprehend, to discern, to know thoroughly, to grasp or perceive clearly, to have clear perception of the meaning of something.* Understanding enables us to see God's hidden hand in irritations and injustices, causing our responses and attitudes to be right when trouble comes. Without an understanding of God's ways we will react incorrectly to injustices and then become bitter. Understanding helps us to cooperate because it breaks down resistance and stubbornness in our hearts. Understanding helps us not to miss the point, but gives us perception of what God is trying to say. Some saints never learn God's ways. Consequently, they spend their whole lives fighting and demanding justice and vindication for themselves. Although Job did not understand the *specifics* of his trial, he understood the broad principles of God's ways, and this saved him.

### People Rebel When They Lack Understanding

The Israelites revolted against the Lord because they had no understanding of what He was trying to do in their lives through their circumstances. God said, “*They do always err in their hearts and have not known my ways*” (Heb. 3:8-10). Because of this, they never entered into God's rest but wandered perpetually in the wilderness. There are many who waste much of their lives going in circles! (See also Psalm 78:37-42.) In the case of Israel, God actually deprived them of understanding because their hearts were so hardened against Him (Deut. 29:3-4). Therefore, we must keep our hearts tender before the Lord in order to receive the spirit of understanding!

### Understanding Helps Us Cooperate With God

Why are some Christians strong and stable while others are up and down all the time? What determines the strength of a believer? What is the deciding factor? I believe the answer is in their *vision*. The difference lies in their grasp of the truth, in their understanding. Truth is much more than a standard of right and wrong. Truth is light! It is an illuminating power that shines into the darkened soul bringing tremendous inner strength and freedom (Jn. 8:32). In several of his epistles, Paul mentions *weak brethren* who have a *weak conscience* (1 Cor. 8; Rom. 14). What is the reason men and women are spiritually feeble? It is because light and revelation have not yet penetrated their being!

A transformation takes place within our souls when God opens our eyes and imparts His understanding to our hearts. Understanding enables us to cooperate with God when adversity comes into our lives to develop and mature us. Without proper understanding, our response to difficulties will be evil. Yes, *evil!* We must understand the concept of trouble or we cannot successfully face purifying trials and go on to Christian perfection.

When a Christian is instructed wrongly on the subject of adversity, he will become confused when difficulties arrive. He may become so disillusioned with Christianity that he turns his back on God. Therefore, we should ask God to give us *an understanding heart* as did Solomon (1 Kgs. 3:9-10). Understanding is God's gift to those who love Him, please Him, and seek Him earnestly. Also, it is imparted to the pure in heart. “The pure in heart shall see [as God sees]” (Mt 5:8). God withheld the gift of understanding from Israel because their hearts were so hardened with accusation against Him (Deut. 29:2-4; Prov. 2:1-5; Dan. 9:13; 12:10; Jn. 7:17).



The more godly and holy a person is, the better he accepts, understands, and copes with adversity. Have you ever noticed the manner in which the world and the disobedient view trouble? It is always with gloom! This is because they are only living for this present life. Contrariwise, the apostle Paul *embraced* his difficulties because he knew and understood the eternal benefit it was going to bring (see 2 Cor. 4:17; Rom. 8:18; 8:28).

*Vision* makes the difference between up-and-down Christians, and those who continue to press on to the end. It is not uncommon at all for believers to sit back at an early age with a *retirement mentality*. This is the end result of *no vision*. Without a vision we dwell carelessly. But the man who has been struck with a real vision understands what God is doing and has a defined mark to press toward. Also, he possesses a holy fear of coming short of it (Prov. 29:18; Heb. 4:1).

### **Understanding Strengthens Us Because:**

1. It gives us the ability to see irritations and injustices from God's perspective.
2. It makes us react the right way to these irritations or injustices.
3. It helps us remove any seeds of bitterness from our hearts while in the heat of a trial.
4. It causes us to cooperate with the Lord and trust Him, even in a fiery furnace.
5. It removes resistance, stubbornness, and hardness from our hearts.
6. It increases our perception of what God would do *in* our lives because of an irritation or trial.
7. It helps us to see the *end* of a matter, and it produces hope.

Before we delve into the Book of Job, I would like you to remember seven points about Job's trial. After that, I want you to remember seven major *reasons* for his trial.

### **Seven Points to Remember About Job's Trial**

1. **Job was not afflicted because of any wrong in his life.**
2. **God was the Author of his trial.**
3. **A trial is really a trial when it is beyond our explanation and understanding.**
4. **Job never complained about the devil. He knew there was a higher power — God.**
5. **God was dealing with one particular thing in Job's life during the trial.**
6. **God was silent for months. God could not explain what He was doing.**
7. **Job had special encounters with God before his trial that enabled him to go through.**

These will be developed on the next few pages.

## IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT JOB'S TRIAL

**1. Job was not afflicted because of any evil in his life**—God's testimony of him was outstanding (1:1, 1:8, 2:3). “There is none like him in the earth, perfect and upright.” God's eternal testimony of him is seen in Ezekiel 14:14,20. He is listed among the three most righteous men in the Old Testament.

**2. God was the author of the trial**—(and the finisher of it). In Romans 10:19, we see that God uses jealousy to fulfill His purposes. The Lord purposely provoked Satan to jealousy by praising Job: “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, one who fears God and shuns evil?” (1:8, 2:3). Satan always wanted to be the greatest, and now God was provoking him to jealousy by drawing attention to Job. The time had come for Job to be tested; therefore, He was stirring up Satan to ask for permission to afflict him.

Job 42:11 reminds us once again that the Lord Himself was the One who was ultimately responsible for this trial. Satan was the afflicter, but God was responsible for the onset of the trial. Revelation 2:10 clearly shows us the reason God still has Satan around . . . “that ye may be tried.” When God has finished using Satan to test us, He will deliver him to eternal destruction (Rev. 20:10).

**3. A trial is really a trial when it is beyond our explanation**—It was not meant for Job to understand the trial, but rather to hold fast and trust God implicitly. Often in a trial God *cannot* explain what He is dealing with or what He is doing, though He would like to. However, many times after the trial is accomplished He does explain.

If God gave us total understanding during a trial, this is what would happen:

- Our faith and other qualities would not develop.
- Our heart would not be *conditioned* to receive what God wants to address.
- It could destroy the work He is doing in our lives.
- It could destroy us. It would be too much for us.

**4. Job never complained about the devil**—Job knew that there was a higher power and that God was ultimately responsible for his predicament. Therefore, his complaint was only to God (1:21). After Job had lost everything he declared, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away.” He did not say, “The devil taketh away.” Certainly, Satan did the afflicting, but Job knew that God sovereignly controlled the entire situation (1:21; 2:10; 42:11).

**5. God was getting at one particular thing in Job's life during the trial**—although the Lord was accomplishing *many other things* as well. During the trial something evil surfaced in Job . . . an attitude that sharply criticized God's wisdom and character for allowing him to pass through such horrible circumstances. Although he was not guilty of this at first, Job ended up condemning God. Yet he found no fault in himself. In so doing he made himself more righteous than God, and this is what the Lord was getting at in Job's heart.

Whenever we question God—we are putting Him down, and lifting ourselves up above Him. From this premise emerges *the theme* of the Book of Job, and it comes in the form of a question: “Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?” (Job 4:17).



## Whenever we question, challenge, or criticize God:

- We are putting Him down, and
- Lifting ourselves up above Him

Upon this premise emerges the theme of the Book of Job

### The Theme

“Shall mortal man be more just than God?  
Shall a man be more pure than his maker?”

(Job 4:17)

**6. God was silent for months**—The trial probably lasted between six months and a year. It could not have been for *years* because we hear Job say he had been suffering for *months*. As has already been stated, it was not meant for Job to understand all the particulars of his trial. He did not know how everything was going to turn out at the end, nor did he have knowledge of the conversation between God and Satan at the commencement of the trial. While the Holy Spirit was silent, Job's friends were busy analyzing, theorizing, and philosophizing. They did not have the word of the Lord. God was not speaking. Thus, these well meaning brethren were judging Job with their natural minds.

Summary of the advice of the friends:

- **Some things they said are right!**
- **Some things they said are wrong! Some things are very wrong!**
- **Some things they said are true enough, but not relevant to Job's situation!**

What Job needed was a good listener. There are few good listeners. When a person is in great pain, say as little as possible. Pray softly, and don't assume that you have the answers or that you are infallible in your advice!

*Job's three friends* were great men. They were peers. We judge a man by the friends he has, for a man fellowships with those on his own level. They loved the Lord and were deeply concerned for the welfare of their friend. The problem was that they did not have a deep enough experience, and therefore they did not have the proper light to understand Job's situation. They had never seen or heard of anything like this before. According to their own observations of life, calamity is *always* a sign of God's judgment, therefore, they felt compelled to exhort him to repent. This they do eloquently! (The Book of Job is written in poetic style, except for chapters 1-2, and the last verses of chapter 42).

It is painful to be misunderstood by close friends. This was one of the hardest aspects of Job's trial. All of us have been victims of being *sized up* by well meaning brethren, but we, too, have been guilty of the same. Thus, we should be forgiving to others who misjudge us, especially those who should know better. At His second coming Christ is asked, “*What are these wounds in thy hands?* [He will answer]; *Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends*” (Zech. 13:6). If we would come to know Jesus intimately, we will have to experience being wounded by our friends.

**7. Job had special encounters with God before his trial**—no man could have ever endured such a trial without first having unusual promises and extraordinary mountain-top experiences from the Lord. We, too, should seek God for our own personal promises. We need special meetings with God in order to be strengthened to face our tests. After we have endured the fiery furnace and passed all of our tests, the double portion awaits us.

Job declared, “*The secret of the Lord was upon my tabernacle*” (see Job 29:1-4). It is clear that Job had knowledge of the mysteries of God and had received special promises from God before he had his trial. Job understood by revelation that he would be in the first resurrection and see the Lord in the coming millennial age (Job 19:25-27, cf. Rev. 20:5,6).

These mountain-top experiences with God strengthened him and held him steady in times of darkness. Spiritually, Job had eaten of the “*hidden manna*” or hidden truths of God's Word (Rev. 2:17). These revelations had imparted supernatural inner strength to him in the same way that Elijah had been strengthened when the angel fed him (I Kg.19:5-8).

Now I would like to give seven specific reasons for Job's trial, although all of the reasons listed on page *Introduction B* could apply.

## **Reasons for Job's Trial**

- 1. It was a test to see what kind of man Job was.**
- 2. God wanted to have something to say to Satan, the accuser.**
- 3. It was to make a righteous man even more righteous.**
- 4. It was for the purpose of bringing a greater revelation of the Lord to Job.**
- 5. It was to bless Job's latter end, to exalt him, and give him an eternal name.**
- 6. It was a test for everyone else around Job, too. Everyone was on trial.**
- 7. His trial was for our sake, also. Job left a message for us to take to heart.**

We will now develop these on the next pages.

## REASONS FOR JOB'S TRIAL

**1. It was a test**—(Job 23:10; 7:18; Psa.11:4-5; 1 Cor. 3:13). Every man will be *tested* by God. Also, his works will be tested. God tested Abraham to see where his priorities were and to have a look at his motives (Gen. 22:1). Satan claimed that Job was only serving God because of the blessings, thus God allowed Satan for a season to strip Job of all his blessings. The Lord knew what He had deposited in Job and how far He could test him. (Anything that stands the fire is only what we have allowed God to put into us.) Job had spent his life saying *yes* to God and this enabled God to build something mighty within him that could stand the fire. Not everyone qualifies for a trial like Job's. It was required of Job to pass many other tests before he could come to this one.

**2. God wanted to have something to say to the accuser, Satan**—Satan had said, “He is only serving you for the blessings; take away all he has and he will curse you to your face.” (Prov. 27:11, Psa:119:42 - “*To give an answer to him that reproaches me.*”) God wanted to have an answer for Satan's accusation. The Lord was confident that Job could pass this most difficult test, and by doing so, God was glorified. God could say to Satan; “Here is a man who remains loyal to me in spite of everything going wrong!” Job's right response was a blow to Satan! When Job lost everything, he kept the right attitude and offered the *sacrifice of thanksgiving*, saying: “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” However, Job did utter some unspiritual words later during his trial as the months dragged on, but he never cursed God or renounced his faith.

**3. To make a righteous man even more righteous and holy**—

There are three basic reasons for difficult times and wilderness trials: (See Deut. 8:2)

- To humble us.
- To prove or test us.
- To show us what is in our hearts.

According to Jeremiah 17:7-10, we do not know what is in our hearts. Job was a righteous man who was placed in a fiery furnace for the purpose of being made even *more* righteous and holy. This deeper cleansing and greater self-knowledge resulted in a greater revelation of the Lord. According to Revelation 22:11, righteousness is *progressive*. “He that is righteous let him [continue to become] more righteous still. And he that is holy, let him [continue to become] more holy still.”

**4. To bring a greater revelation of the Lord**—(42:5) At the end of his trial Job was able to declare, “I have heard thee by the ear but now mine eye seeth thee.” Truly you and I will see the Lord more clearly when the veil of our flesh is cut away. Job's trial was called a captivity (42:10). *Captivity* in Scripture speaks of trials and hard bondage, yet we must remember that we are the Lord's prisoners. The purpose of captivity is for God to give us a heart to know Him (Jer. 24:5-6). It is for our good! When we are purged from the spirit of idolatry, pride, and other vanities, oh how clear our vision will become! (Mt. 5:8 “The pure in heart *see*.”)

**5. To bless Job's latter end**—(To exalt him and give him an eternal name). The important fact to remember in life is not where we have come from, but where we are going. Our end is what really matters (Deut. 8:16; Job 42:12; Jas. 5:11). In Psalm 45:17, there is a promise: “I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations.” Job inherited this blessing. From Ezekiel 14:14, we see that God was honoring Job 1500 years later, and He still is today. As a matter of fact, He will continue to do so for all eternity. “The memory of the just is blessed” (Prov.10:7). The whole purpose for humiliating experiences is that God may *exalt us* in due time (I Pet. 5:6).

**6. It was for the purpose of testing every one—all were on trial.** The focus has always been on Job and the fact that he was being tested by God. However, everyone else's heart was being tested, too. All of Job's brethren were on trial. Job's relatives were on trial, and so were the people downtown. Actually, the whole region was on trial before the Lord. When *a leader* is going through a trial, God is carefully looking into the hearts of everyone in the whole fellowship or organization to see what they are saying and thinking. God will use the same measuring rod on us that we use on others, so let us think and act mercifully (see Mt. 7:1-5).

**7. His trial was for our sake also**—Job left behind a vital message, not only to his own generation, but to all succeeding generations as well. God recorded this trial in His eternal Word in order to instruct every future generation. The critical lesson Job learned in his trial is one that God has sought to teach mankind from the beginning of time.

### ***THE LESSON LEARNED IS THIS:***

■ In spite of any tragedy, sorrow or disappointment that may come into our life, God is infinitely *just* and we cannot point the finger at Him or charge Him with irresponsibility. Neither should we ever question His love for us.

God's character, wisdom and good judgment cannot be criticized. (In times of pain or loss man often responds negatively. Too often God is charged with cruelty, insensitivity, and being unfair.)

There will be available grace (divine enablement) for every test. Also, God will ultimately resolve every predicament if we keep our hearts right and we do not allow ourselves to become bitter.

If God does not give an explanation of what He is doing, we must *trust* Him anyway. This brings us to the theme of Job once again.

### **SUMMARY OF THE THEME**

#### **Job 4:17**

**“Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?”**

When tragedy or heartbreak comes, man's first reaction is: “God, this is not fair; *you* are not fair!” Man is too quick to utter error against the Lord (Isaiah 32:6). By criticizing God's wisdom and character, we sin! (Note: Most sins we commit are with our mouths.) In doing this we are putting the Lord down, and lifting ourselves up above Him. Job was guilty of this later on in the trial, though not at first. He condemned the Lord but found no fault in himself, making himself more righteous than God (35:2, 40:8). God wanted to teach Job and everyone of us this lesson—“*Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?*”

## RIGHTEOUSNESS IS PROGRESSIVE

Job was declared “perfect and upright” in 1:1, 1:8, and 2:3. However, God still had further light He wanted to give Job. With further light he would recognize a greater need in his heart. Job was living up to all the light God had given to him thus far. Therefore, God could declare that he was perfect and upright. He was sincere and mature in this sense of the word, but he had *blind spots* just as we do. In his trial unredeemed areas in his heart surfaced, areas he had been unaware of before. When these came to his knowledge, he was able (after his confession) to experience new cleansing. Thus, Job represents a righteous man who is being dealt with by God in order to become even more righteous and holy.

*Life is motion!* Christianity itself is progressive! It is going from one stage to another, from *glory to glory, from one level of faith to another*. We must continue to grow and move on in our Christian experience. True Christianity forces us to face issue after issue in our lives and to have a meeting with God in each of these areas. Below are several Scriptures that imply movement and growth:

### Scriptures Involving Motion and Growth

- **1 John 2:3** “*And hereby we do know that we [are coming to] know Him, if we keep his commandments.*” We will only come to know God if we are responding to what He is saying to us (1 Pet.1:22). Our love for God is proven by doing His commandments (Jn.14:15,15:14,1 Jn. 2:5, 5:2-3). Love for God is always preceded by enlightenment or truth. Light *leads* to love. Love for the brethren and true unity can *only* be arrived at as we are obeying what God is saying to us (1 Jn.1:7).
- **Hosea 6:3** “*Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord.*” There are many issues that we cannot know or understand unless we continue to plod on in our walk with the Lord.
- **2 Corinthians 5:17** “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are [becoming] new.*” Although we are immediately transplanted from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, all things do not *immediately* become new, such as old ideas or habits. It takes *time* for everything to become new in our lives. For example, we may have to break off old friendships that have corrupted us.
- **Romans 6:17** “*Righteousness unto holiness*” implies that one will lead to the other. This takes time and growth.
- **Revelation 22:11** “*He that is righteous, let him [continue to become] more righteous still; and he that is holy, let him [continue to become] more holy still.*” Thus, we can see that walking in righteousness will lead to holiness.
- **2 Corinthians 7:1** “*Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*” *Perfecting* suggests that it takes time and does not come immediately.
- **Hebrews 6:1** “*Therefore leaving the [basics of] the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.*”
- **Ephesians 2:10** “*We are his workmanship [being] created in Christ Jesus.*” This is present tense. God *is* working on us.

## IMPUTED / IMPARTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

**1. Imputed Righteousness** (Rom. 4:1-8). At new birth we are *counted* righteous even though there are areas in our lives where we are *not* righteous yet. God counts us righteous because we are trusting in His Son, the One Who died for us and paid our debt, the One who flatly forgives us when we come to Him. We are counted (imputed) righteous because of Jesus, and we are under His covering. In essence, imputed righteousness means we are *counted* righteous, even though we are *not* righteous and have many problems still to be addressed and corrected in our lives. The charismatic movement of recent decades has needed to *progress* past imputed righteousness to imparted righteousness ... from being *counted* righteous to *being made* righteous. This is much deeper and requires many acts of obedience.

**2. Imparted Righteousness** (Rev. 19:7-8; Matt. 5:6; Psa. 24:5). Everyone is *counted* righteous when he accepts Jesus as his Savior. But only those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness become *filled* with righteousness. In Revelation 19:8, the *word* means something much deeper than *imputed* righteousness. It means righteous *works or deeds*. This is righteousness that is experienced and practiced. Therefore, it is easily distinguished from imputed righteousness. *Imputed* righteousness does not involve our works but only *our standing* with God. When we first believed in Jesus we were counted righteous (though we were not righteous), but here in Revelation 19:8 are some who have been *made* righteous. God was permitted to work in these hearts to *make* them truly righteous.

Observe that the people in Revelation 19:8 were coming out of tribulation. They had been in the fire. God had cleansed them of unrighteous works and deeds and they were ready to rule and reign with Christ. *Worked out* righteousness is required to reign with Christ (Rom. 5:17). Paul declared, “Tribulation worketh patience.” Tribulation perfects many other virtues, too. Job is known for *patience* (Jas. 5:11). He received patience of spirit, in tribulation. The word “tribulation” actually means *pressure*. Job had been through his own “great tribulation.” (See Rev. 7:14).

**3. Holiness**—is deeper still. It involves not just our actions being right, but all of our inner life becoming subject to God. This means that our motives, affections, desires, and thoughts should belong wholly to the Lord. We could be righteous but not holy. We could still be hard, critical, and have many unsundered affections and thoughts. God wants to lead us on to true holiness (Eph. 4:24).

### SUMMARY

- **Imputed Righteousness**—to be *counted* righteous, though we are not. It is simply our judicial position and standing with God because Another has paid our debt and has acquitted us freely of all trespasses committed (Rom. 4:1-8).
- **Imparted Righteousness**—to be *made* righteous. This is righteousness *worked out* in the heart after God has dealt with us, so that we *practice* righteousness. This righteousness is granted only to those who hunger and thirst for it (Mt. 5:6). It is this kind of righteousness that is required in order to reign with Christ (Rom. 5:17; Rev. 19:7-8; Psa. 24:5).
- **Holiness**—to have every part of us belong to God (thoughts, desires, motives, all our worship). Righteousness will lead to holiness (Rom. 6:19; Rev. 22:11).



“He that is righteous, let him [continue to become] more righteous still; He that is holy, let him [continue to become] more holy still” (Rev. 22:11). Righteousness will *lead* to holiness. Here is the order: **1).** From imputed righteousness, to **2).** imparted righteousness, to **3).** holiness (Rom. 6:19). Job was in the process of being made more righteous and holy.

### Righteousness and Holiness Compared

Righteousness is doing right acts and deeds. It is to deal fairly and justly with others. Holiness, however, is much deeper! We can be righteous without being *holy*. Many people in the Scriptures were righteous but not holy, and this is where many Christians find themselves today. Lot, the nephew of Abraham, is a prime example. Lot had a sense of justice, but he was a man who was in love with the world too (2 Pet. 2:7-8). There were certain kings such as Asa and Jehoshaphat who were declared by the Lord to be righteous, but they would *not* remove *the high places*. These men administrated many good deeds and acts of righteousness, while reserving in their hearts other areas of devotion and affection for what was unholy. Thus, God wants to work in these inner recesses of our hearts, and bring us on to true holiness.

“Righteousness unto holiness” (Rom. 6:19). Practicing righteous acts and responding to what God is putting His finger on in our lives will lead to holiness (1 Pet. 1:22). Obeying and responding to the truth will lead us unto “*unfeigned love for the brethren*” (unity), and unto holiness.

#### REVIEW

At new birth we are counted righteous, though we still have many problems. God then desires to thoroughly work in our hearts so that we are *made* righteous, truly righteous. In the meantime, we should have peace in our hearts as we rest in the assurance that God looks at us as being righteous, while He is *making* us righteous and holy. Here is the order:

1. Imputed righteousness—affects only our standing. We are *counted* righteous.
2. Imparted righteousness—we have been *made* righteous. Our *deeds* are right.
3. True Holiness—every part of us belongs to God. *Affections and motives* are pure.

1 John 2:12-14

▲ Imputed Righteousness	Little Children	Outer Court
▲ Imparted Righteousness	Young Men	Holy Place
▲ True Holiness	Fatherhood	Holy of Holies

Remember, the key to growth is *continuing to respond to the Light*. Light brings us to love. There can never be true love or unity unless we are responding to the truth (1 Jn. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:22). Responding to the truth remedies in our hearts those things which cause disunity.

# OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF JOB

## **Part One**

Chapters 1 - 2

### *Tragedy Strikes Job*

(God uses Satan to test a righteous man)

## **Part Two**

Chapters 3 - 31

### *Job and His Three Friends*

(They misunderstood Job and his trial)

## **Part Three**

Chapters 32 - 37

### *Elihu's Counsel to Job*

(A fourth friend with a heavenly perspective)

## **Part Four**

Chapters 38 - 42

### *Job Before the Lord*

(Seeing himself in God's light, he is purged and healed)



# TRAGEDY STRIKES JOB

## Part One—Chapters 1 - 2

### Greatness of Job's Character 1:1-12

Read Chapter One. The first twelve verses of this chapter are heaven's testimony of Job's greatness of character. Job was “perfect and upright.” God even declared this to the adversary, Satan. He was a man who “feared God and shunned evil.” This is the hallmark of wisdom, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Although Job was very wealthy, he was also very humble. Actually, money has nothing to do with pride or humility. Sometimes people who are poor are very proud, and sometimes people who are rich are very dependent upon God.

Job was also a good father. He always wanted to know where his children were and what they were doing. He rose up early every morning to pray for them, and he offered expensive sacrifices for each one of them. Job was concerned even with their *attitudes* and wayward tendencies, saying, “It may be that my sons have ... cursed God in their hearts” (v5). Thus, he prayed for them continually.

In verses 6-12, the narrative changes from an earthly scene to heaven. Here we see a discussion between the Lord and Satan, and the subject is Job. God is the one who initiated the conversation, and He is the Author of the upcoming trial. The time had come for Job to be tested. Since Satan had always wanted to be number one, the Lord provoked Satan to jealousy by praising Job. He induced the adversary to ask for permission to remove Job's blessings, which God granted.

### Job's Trial—In Three Major Stages

1. In the initial onslaught, Job lost all of his possessions. Satan was permitted to take everything he owned. Hundreds of employees (servants) were killed, and on the same day, all of his children perished in a violent storm. Yet God did not permit Satan to touch Job (1:12).
2. After Job passed the first test, Satan was given permission to afflict his body (2:4-6), *but* he was not allowed to take his life. Satan can only go as far as the Lord says, and not an inch further!
3. Then his wife, relatives, and the people of that region turned against him, and his closest friends misunderstood and misjudged him. And further still, the Lord kept silent. It was a most horrible trial. Anyone who criticizes Job has not suffered.

### Job's Remarkable Response

Job's reaction to all of this was remarkable! Satan had said, “Take away all that he has and he will curse you to your face” (1:11). Therefore, God allowed Satan to strip him of everything. How did Job respond to all this? (1:20-22). He blessed the Lord, falling down before Him in worship. What a blow to Satan! We need right attitudes and responses in order to defeat Satan! We overcome Satan by refusing to respond as he would. Job declared, “The Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!” Not only was this a deathblow to Satan, it was also an exhibition of the highest form of worship possible. Job was now offering *the sacrifice of thanksgiving* after losing everything!

## Right Response to Injury Spares Man From the Pit

Not only was Job's *right response* to injury a blow to Satan, it also kept Job from sliding down into a deep pit. Most emotional problems, depression, and suicide start from an injury. When a man or woman does not receive grace from God, the heart becomes infected with bitterness. Whenever there is an injury, God offers us grace. Grace is actually *a substance*. God deposits this substance called grace into us when we are in need (Heb. 4:16). If a person hardens his heart, refuses grace, and chooses to cherish a wound or offense, then he will become very bitter (Heb.12:15). If the person continues to harden his heart, he will dig himself into a very deep and horrible pit. Eventually the victim will no longer be able to cope with life and may even attempt suicide. We have seen this happen to a number of Christian brethren.

## People Destroy Themselves—Not Their Circumstances

The real harm in life comes *from what people do to themselves*. The Apostle Paul shouted to a man who was attempting to commit suicide—“Do thyself no harm” (Acts 16:28). Men and women do wrong to themselves and ruin themselves by their sins and by wrong responses to life's difficulties. If we do not hurt ourselves, then no one else and nothing else can really hurt us. If we live right, everything plotted against us will ultimately turn to our benefit. When we harden our hearts we are destroying ourselves, and we are committing spiritual suicide. No one else is doing it to us (though we may claim they are). In actual fact, we are doing it to ourselves. The ten trials Israel faced in the wilderness did not harm them! Their *response* to the trials is what harmed them. The ten trials were ordained of God to bless them and prepare them for Canaan.

We determine our own destiny. Someone else does not do it for us. We are the only one who can really harm ourselves. It is not the devil, offenders, or anything else. Ultimately, we are the ones who destroy ourselves by wrong responses to life's troubles. There will be no pointing of the finger on the Day of Judgment. Abigail was married to a fool, yet she had a beautiful countenance and possessed good understanding (1 Sam. 25:2-3). Abigail did not say, “My life is ruined because of my husband.” She did not use her husband for an excuse to go her own way, as some spouses do. Consider what people *do to themselves*:

- Oppose themselves (Acts 18:6)
- Harden themselves (Heb. 3:8, 15)
- Defile themselves (Lev.18:20)
- Corrupt themselves (Ex. 32:5)
- Make themselves vile (1 Sam. 3:13)
- Pollute themselves (Eze. 20:31)
- Cut themselves (1 Kg.18:28)
- Dishonor themselves (Rom. 1:24)
- Separate themselves from God by their iniquities (Isa. 59:1-2)
- Hide themselves from the presence of the Lord (Gen. 3:8)
- Sell themselves to work evil (1 Kg. 21:20)
- Destroy themselves (Hos.13:9)
- Judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life (Acts 13:46)

*Friend, please —“Do thyself no harm.” Acts 16:28*

Job's right response to injury saved him. Also, his right confession gave him the victory over Satan. We overcome the Adversary by the word of our testimony (See Rev. 12:10-11). What we say when we are in pain is very important!

## KNOWING OUR ADVERSARY (2 Corinthians 2:11)

Since the Book of Job has a dialogue between God and the adversary in the first two chapters, I would like to spend a little time on the subject of knowing our foe. Every believer should understand that *jealousy* is the motivating force behind everything Satan does. Jealousy is always associated with the desire to be number one. When Satan tried to usurp the throne from God, he was cast down. From the time of his rebellion and demotion, Satan has been driven and tormented with jealousy. He covets every position of power. He does not want anyone to have any of the blessings he forfeited. Most of all, Satan has a special hatred toward anyone who is going to replace him—men and women like Job.

(1:10) “*Hast thou not made a hedge about him and his house, and all that he hath on every side?*” It is obvious that Satan had been *observing* Job and all of his works for some time. He had wanted to get to him and destroy him but could not because God had put a wall of protection around everything he had. This “hedge” protected Job, his home, family, business, and everything he had. We are warned by Peter to be on guard because Satan, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan will seek to destroy us and our family if he can! Thus, we must walk in wisdom.

(1:11, 2:5). “*Take away all that he has and he will curse you to your face.*” Observe the cynicism of Satan. Constantly he questions the good motives of others. He is called *the accuser of the brethren* in Revelation 12:10. In effect he was saying to the Lord—“No one really loves you! The only reason Job is serving you is because of all the benefits. Take away all the blessings and he will curse you to your face.” Satan is a jealous, tormented being. These traits are rooted in *pride*, and Satan is full of pride. *Pride* never allows anyone to have rest. Notice also from 1:7 and 2:2, that he “walks up and down in the earth, and goes to and fro in it,” signifying his *restlessness*.

(2:4). “*All that a man has will he give for his life.*” Satan knows where man is *vulnerable*. Thus, he uses terrorism and fear to manipulate man. Today we see his tactics of blackmail, hostage-taking, and ransom demands, because he knows *all that a man has will he give for his life*. Satan was saying, “Let me touch his flesh and then surely he will turn against you.”

God gave Satan permission to afflict Job, but within limits. He could not take his life. Satan went out quickly and afflicted him with sore boils. In 2:10, Job acknowledges God as *the Lord of the situation*, for “*in all this Job did not sin with his lips.*” Once again Satan was dealt a severe blow! Job proved Satan wrong yet another time! Job did not curse God. His spiritual roots went down a long, long way, as seen by the way he reacted. Job was a deep worshipper of Jehovah. He was accustomed to giving thanks to God in the good times and in the bad times as well.

“*Since thou was precious in my sight . . . therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life*” (Isa. 43:4). Can you imagine what God was willing to sacrifice to get at the heart of one big man! In order to do a mighty work in Job and to leave a message to all succeeding generations, God was willing to sacrifice Job's family, business, health, reputation, and many servants. But remember, the one who sacrificed and suffered the most was the Lord Himself! Surely the Lord would reward Job double at the end, and give him an eternal, honorable name.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT SATAN

- **He has limited power.** He can do nothing unless God allows it. All power belongs to God (see Job 1:12; 2:6). The angry waves of the sea represent the assaults of the devil, to which God says, “*Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed*” (38:11). God draws a line and says, “You cannot come any further.”
- **Satan still has great wisdom,** although he has perverted it. “Behold thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee” (Ezek. 28:3). Satan is not to be taken lightly or made fun of. We do not have the victory over him unless we are walking in humility and unless we have the mind of the Lord for each situation he is controlling. We should never rail or mock him (Jude 9).
- **He is tormented and restless!** These conflicts stem from the tremendous pride in his heart. Anyone with great pride will suffer from mental and emotional conflicts. To lose face is agony to the proud. A humble person has no face to lose! Observe that Satan has no peace, for he is found “*going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it*” (Job 1:7, 2:2). Proverbs 13:10 declares: “Only by pride cometh contentions.” Arguments, debates, controversies, and intellectualism are all rooted in *pride*. And Satan, who is full of pride, is the author of all these.
- **His greatest weapon is his mouth.** A serpent's power is always in his tongue. Satan is a liar, and the father of lies (Jn. 8:44). Sin entered into man through his rationalizations (2 Cor.11:3). The nations of the world are deceived because of his tongue (Rev.12:9). Christians, too, continue to have problems in their lives because of believing his lies—“*You'll never make it; there is no hope; things will never get any better.*” In Matthew 4:3, Satan is also called “The Tempter.”
- **Right attitudes and responses to injury bruise Satan.** Every time we refuse to act like Satan, we gain the victory over him. Satan had a good beginning but *became* bitter. It was a choice! An *injury or test* will make us bitter or better. In Christ's temptation (Mt. 3:1-11), Satan was trying everything in his power to make the Lord Jesus act like himself! Satan wanted Jesus to use His power indiscreetly and then be able to say to Him, “You're no better than I am; You have no power over me.” Jesus (*as a man and for man*) refused to be like Satan and gained the dominion over him.
- **We overcome Satan by the word of our testimony.** (Rev. 12:11). “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb AND by the word of their testimony.” Job's testimony of thanksgiving to the Lord after his agonizing loss of everything was a deathblow to Satan (read Job 1:20-22). Satan had said, “*If you take away all his blessings, he will curse you to your face.*” He was wrong!
- **Satan is necessary for our refining.** The main reason God still has Satan around is to test the believers. “The devil shall cast some of you into prison, *that ye may be tried*” (Rev. 2:10).
- **Satan will be destroyed eternally when God is finished using him to test us.** (Rev. 20:10). “*And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone ... and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.*” His doom is sure and he knows it (Matt. 25:41). God created hell for Satan and his angels and all the rebellious who follow him. Anyone who goes to hell will be there *by his own choosing* (Acts 13:46). God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). God Himself has bled and died for our pardon. When man rejects the message of love and pardon, he has chosen to go to hell. Judgment is eternal (2 Thes.1:8-9).

- **God created him perfect; he became evil by choice.** (Ezek. 28:15; Isa.14:12-14). “Thou wast perfect in all thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” “How art thou fallen from heaven O Lucifer.” Satan and his angels fell because of their great rebellion. They were not created rebellious (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6). It was a choice.

- **Satan fell because of unthankfulness and pride.** (Read Isa.14:12-14.) God had bestowed upon him extraordinary beauty, wisdom, authority, and charisma, but all of these were not enough—he wanted more! Lucifer became extremely unthankful and proud, then defiant. He wanted to be God. Unthankfulness is the *first* step to backsliding (Rom.1:21).

- **Satan wanted equal rights!** “*I will be like the Most High!*” (Isa.14:12-14.) He demanded equal voice with God. Satan is the *father* of the Equal Rights movement. Satan undermines leadership and authority on every level because of his jealousy to be in control and to be at the top. Jealousy is always the result of self-seeking motives—the desire to be number one.

Satan demanded *equal voice* with God. Because this foolish desire was denied, he has resented God ever since and has sought to turn every one in heaven and in earth against Him. He was able to sway a third of the angels against God (Rev.12:4, 7-9). Notice in Revelation 12:4 that his tail *draws* these angels. In other words he is their head or leader. In Revelation chapter 12, Satan is portrayed as a *dragon*, although he is an *archangel*.

- **Change of name signifies change of character.** The fact that his name was changed from Lucifer (light-bearer) to Satan (adversary, slanderer), signifies a change of character—from good to evil. God did *not* create him evil. Everything God makes is good. God *is* good! The phrase in Isaiah 45:7 (“I make peace and create evil”) does not suggest that God is the author of sin as some have asserted. The use of the word “evil” in Isaiah 45:7 can be translated *sorrow, adversity, affliction, and calamity*. Sacred Scripture describes Job's trial as an *evil* which God sent (read Job 42:11, KJV).

- **God did not give him the gift of repentance.** Because of the light Lucifer possessed, his rebellion was considered irremissible. His uprising was committed right in the face of God. For this very reason, pardon was not offered to the fallen angels either (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6). Man is veiled from the light and still has the opportunity to repent. Paul was shown mercy because his transgressions were done “in ignorance and unbelief” (see 1 Tim.1:13, cf. Lk. 23:34).

- **Satan knows his doom is sure, and so do the demons.** The demons in Matthew 8:29 were horrified when they saw the Lord and cried, “*Have you come to torment us before the time?*” Demons are conscious of their coming judgment, and they panic at the thought of it. The devils “*believe and tremble*” according to James 2:19. Satan knows his time is short; thus, he is doing everything in his power to injure God by turning others against Him. His purpose is to inflict as much damage as he can, and he desires to take as many with him as he can into judgment. All this is done in an attempt to get back at God. We should understand what is motivating Satan. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:11, “*We are not ignorant of his devices.*”

- **We should not be devil-conscious.** (Rev. 2:24). “*Which have not known the depths of Satan.*” It is unwise to fill our mind with the things of darkness. We should not look for a demon in every corner or be overly involved in the study of heathen religions (Jer.10:2). We must not learn *the way of the heathen*. Instead, let us dwell on the Light, on Jesus!



- **Satan says God has no love.** Satan accuses God of having no love. The fallen nature in man does the same. God's Son coming to earth to die for man is His eternal proof to the universe that He really cares. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16).

- **Christ gives us power over Satan.** As a Man, Jesus defeated Satan in every aspect. Christ gives us authority over Satan as we walk humbly with God. Truthfully, we only have authority over Satan when we are moving in the Spirit and have the mind of the Lord in every situation. Sometimes God has an *appointed time* for a healing or a deliverance, and no amount of “taking authority over the devil” will work. We must be moving in the Spirit and in God's will.

- **What Satan is guilty of, he accused Job of.** Satan had said of Job, “He's only serving you for the blessings. Just take away all the blessings and he will curse you to your face” (Job 1:9-11). Satan was saying—“He is only serving you for selfish benefits.” Unfortunately, what Satan accused Job of, is true of some believers. Multitudes follow Jesus only because He is meeting their needs (see John 6:26-27). The fact is, God *loves* to bless us and meet our every need. But God is also looking for a bride who loves Him, not only for the blessings, but simply because she loves HIM. Otherwise she would be immature, selfish, self-seeking, and self-centered.

This was the only reason Lucifer served the Lord—it was only for what he could get *for himself*. God is going to test all of our hearts to see what we are really serving Him for! Lucifer only served the Lord as long as everyone was praising him and standing in awe of his beauty, charm, wisdom, charisma, and his musical abilities. He was the talk of heaven. Was he thankful? No! All he wanted was more, more—more for himself. God had to demote him because of his folly and pride. Was Lucifer sorry for his pride and defiance? No! He was only sorry because of his *demotion*. Therefore, it is obvious that he was only serving God for the blessings. The very thing of which he was most guilty was what he used as an accusation against Job.

God tested Abraham to see if God was *number one* in his life, or if the promises and blessings were number one. When Abraham willingly offered Isaac back to God, it was not only a testimony to God but also to Satan (1 Cor. 4:9). The spirit world knows if we are serving God out of love for Him or because we want something for ourselves. God longs to have something to say to His accusers! He longs to be able to say to Satan, “Here is someone who is NOT like you, Satan. He or she loves me whether I give or *remove* the blessings. They have defeated you Satan!” (Prov. 27:11).

- **We will replace Satan and his angels.** Satan has great hatred for mankind, especially for the believers. He knows that some of us are going to *replace* him. Now that one third of the angels have been cast out of heaven, undoubtedly, there are vacancies which will be occupied by the redeemed. The overcomers in particular are given the privilege of judging the angels and running the affairs of the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 2:26-27; Psa.149:6-9). Those who replace Satan will have *passed the tests* that he failed. Perhaps the ultimate test will be on the issue of motives and affections. Men like Job and Abraham proved that God and the will of God were more important than the blessings, the promises, the prestige, and the glory. You and I need to know upon what we have centered our hearts! Are you serving God only if He meets certain “conditions”? Have you set deadlines for God, or delivered ultimatums to Him? If you are serving God only if he meets your conditions, you are not going to defeat Satan. “We have come to do *thy* will O God.”

## Summary of Chapters 1-2

- ◆ Job was “perfect and upright.” He was living up to all the light God had given him.
- ◆ He feared the Lord. This fear is the beginning of wisdom. Therefore, Job was a wise man.
- ◆ He had ten children—seven sons and three daughters.
- ◆ Job prayed for his children every day. He was concerned even for their attitudes.
- ◆ He was very wealthy, yet he was also very humble.
- ◆ Job was the greatest man in his whole region. He had an outstanding reputation.
- ◆ Satan still has access to heaven, appearing among the “sons of God” on a certain day in heaven.
- ◆ God provoked Satan to jealousy when he brought up the subject of Job's greatness.
- ◆ God initiated the oncoming trial of Job.
- ◆ Satan charged that Job only served God for the benefits.
- ◆ Satan had tried to attack Job on previous occasions, but was hindered because of a “hedge.”
- ◆ The Adversary said that if Job's blessings were removed, Job would curse God to his face.
- ◆ God gave Satan license to remove all Job's possessions and family, but he could not touch Job.
- ◆ The hedge was removed by God, not because of a negative confession by Job.
- ◆ In one day, Satan destroyed everything Job owned.
- ◆ Job was the most righteous man in his generation, yet he experienced catastrophe.
- ◆ Satan was trying to exasperate Job by hitting him with everything at once.
- ◆ Job had great peace. He shaved himself and fell down and worshipped.
- ◆ Job's response of worship dealt a blow to Satan's charge that he would curse God.
- ◆ Job did not sin with his lips. Most of the sins we commit are with the tongue.
- ◆ The right response to injury and loss saved Job's mental, emotional, and spiritual health.
- ◆ After passing the first test, Job was qualified for the second phase.
- ◆ Now Satan wanted to strike his body. Satan knows how dear a man's health is.
- ◆ Job still maintained his integrity, even after being struck from head to foot with sore boils.
- ◆ Job's wife could not handle the test. In hysteria, she told Job to curse God and die. Job told his wife to get under control, and to expect difficult times as well as good times from God's hand.
- ◆ Still Job did not sin with his lips. This is absolutely remarkable.
- ◆ Now Job is visited by three close friends who are totally dumbfounded by his trial.

*Except for chapters 1-2, and the end of chapter 42, the Book of Job is written in poetic style. From this point on, the style becomes poetic until the end of the book.*





# TRIAL BY THREE FRIENDS

## Part Two—Chapters 3 - 31

### His Three Closest Friends Come to Comfort Him

Their motive for coming was good. They had sincere love and deep concern for Job (2:11-13). Job's appearance was so terrible that he was scarcely recognizable (2:12). Job was like the mutilated Man of Sorrows prophesied by Isaiah (Isa. 52:14). His friends had discipline enough not to say anything for seven whole days, but then they lost it (4:2). We should say as little as possible to people who are in great pain. We should not ask them a lot of questions (2:13), but pray softly!

### JOB'S FIRST DISCOURSE

#### Chapter 3

Job was very depressed and wishes he had never been born. “After this . . . Job opened his mouth” (3:1). Now, after a long restraint Job begins to speak—Why? Why? Why? (3:11, 3:12, 3:20). Job is asking, “Why Lord?” “*Why is light and life given to the miserable and bitter in soul?*” (3:20). Truthfully, there is no other way to have *life* and *light* but by first being plummeted into the depths of bitter and miserable experiences. Truth becomes alive and vivid after drinking deeply of the cup of suffering. Of necessity, there cannot be truth in the inward parts, as David says in Psalm 51:6, without the work of painful experiences. True ministry, power, and authority come after experiencing Job 3:20-24. This is the way to measure how much *life* and *light* we possess!

(3:25) “For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me...” Job knew beforehand that a severe trial was coming, although God did not give him details (when, how, why, or how long). God knew that he needed to be prepared for what was coming. God will give us *foreknowledge* if He knows we need it, or if it will help us through a trial. In this case, Job needed to know! At times we need to know beforehand or we could be thrown into utter confusion and despair (cf. Jn.14:29).

### FIRST REPLY OF ELIPHAZ

#### Chapters 4 - 5

After remaining silent for seven whole days, the three friends lose control and begin to speak. “Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, If we [venture or attempt] to commune with thee, wilt thou be [offended]? but who can withhold himself from speaking?” (4:1-2).

Eliphaz (one of Job's best friends) thinks Job was being judged for sin. Eliphaz was a man of “principles,” but Bible principles only work when they are applied rightly. “*You reap what you sow*” is his reasoning (4:8). In Job's case, this was a wrong application of truth and it hurt him deeply.

“Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?” (4:7). How feeble is the knowledge of Eliphaz! History is filled with examples of innocent and righteous people who have suffered affliction and martyrdom. In 5:3-4, he implies that Job's children were killed as a result of God's judgment for his sin, but that if he would only repent and humble himself, the Lord would have mercy upon him and restore blessing (5:8-27). In 5:5, Eliphaz suggests that robbers took all his substance as God's judgment “upon a man who is silly and foolish.” He is applying all of these illustrations to Job.

Many of the verses in chapter 5 (and the other discourses of the three friends) are true statements. God could even quicken them to you, and give you promises from them. The problem is that many of the verses that Eliphaz and his friends quoted to Job were not suited for Job's situation. They were promises, exhortations, and spiritual truths that were spoken out of season to Job. Isaiah 50:4 must become a reality to us! Let us learn to speak a word *in season* to those who are weary.

### **Wrong Application of Truth**

In 5:19-25, Eliphaz sermonizes to Job of God's ability to preserve the righteous during times of war and famine. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine, he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue: neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh" (v19-22). These are marvellous promises. God is able to protect our children even during the times of coming tribulation and trouble (v25). Yet these truths were not suitable for Job's situation. Job had just lost all of his children and he had devastation on every hand.

"You reap what you sow" explained Eliphaz (4:8). This is a true statement, and it is repeated by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 6:7. But Eliphaz was making a wrong application of truth here. He assumed that Job had been planting evil and now he had come to harvest time. But there is something he was omitting. The end of the story had not been told. A year later Job would be reaping *a double portion*. What had Job been planting all of those years? He had sown mercy to the poor and afflicted, he had been honest and upright in all his dealings with others. Job had an honorable reputation, even among the unredeemed, and he had been a good father. Eliphaz was making a *premature* judgment of Job.

Eliphaz was a man of "principles." He placed everything in *categories*, and he was forcing Job into one of his categories. Job did not fit any mold, however. When God works in the lives of his saints, there is no rulebook. Each situation is unique. Job's trial was unlike that of anyone else. God did not wish to speak yet. It was not meant for Job to understand his trial at this time. Sometimes God is silent. If God had explained everything to Job and shown him the outcome of his trial, it could have destroyed what God was doing in his life. In some situations, God does not wish to give us light (Isa. 50:10) and we have to trust in His character. When we are in the fire, we can apply every theory and principle in the book; but, in the final analysis, they just do not work. The only thing we can do is cry out to God for his life-sustaining *grace*, and that is precisely what God wants us to do.

### **What Could I Have Done Differently?**

Job's trial would contradict and challenge the theology of any era. Even good brethren looked at Job narrowly and said—"Brother, your wife is not in order, your children have not had a good end, your finances are a disaster, and everyone is speaking against you." Job cried out, "But what could I have done differently?" The simple answer to that is—NOTHING. Sometimes there is absolutely nothing we could have done to have averted our circumstances. It may be that God has simply lured us into his net (Psa. 66:11, Lam. 1:13, 3:7, Jer. 20:7) to refine us as silver, *only to bring new blessings*. When Jacob sent Joseph to see his brethren, he was being lured into God's net (Gen. 37:13-18).

## JOB'S FIRST ANSWER

### Chapters 6-7

In 6:1-3, Job complains that if his grief could be weighed in the balances, it would be heavier than all the sand of the sea. Job begs for pity from his friends (6:14). He feels betrayed and deserted by them. In effect, he was saying: “You are like a frozen brook. When things get hot, you melt and go away” (6:15-17). Then he pleads with his brethren to show him what he has done wrong, saying, “Cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (6:24).

“How forcible are right words, but what does your arguing reprove?” (6:25). Right words are very powerful. Argument never settles anything. Right words hit the center of the target, but argument is only “hit and miss.” Job told the brethren that they had offered him no answers for his predicament and that all their striving and trying to correct him had accomplished nothing.

Job probably was quite dramatic as he defended himself before them. “Should you try to reprove the words of a man who is desperate, which are like wind?” (6:26). Job was in absolute anguish. His talk must have been wild and rash. We should be gentle with people who are overwhelmed with grief. How would we react if we were in Job's situation? But the brethren, instead of being sensitive to Job's desperation, are feeling insulted, and the whole dialogue is starting to get out of control. Emotions and spiritual pride are getting upset on all sides (cf. Prov.13:10).

#### “Months of Futile Suffering”

(7:3) “So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed me.” The trial has now run into months. Job could not sleep, his body and bones ached. His boils had putrefying infection (7:5). He was an awful sight to behold, but *deep humility* was being worked out within him. (In hospitals you lose all your dignity.) Are we able to have compassion on those who are lowest down? Jesus could! Job was able to have *feeling* for others after being so low himself! How much *empathy* do we have for others? How *low* have we been plunged?

#### “Mine Eye Shall No More See Good”

(7:7) “Mine eye shall no more see good.” Everything looked bleak! Job was so depressed that he thought he would never be happy or prosperous again. *He was very wrong!* God had a marvellous future awaiting him at the end of his trial. Discouragement has a source. Discouragement is the result of believing what God is *not* saying about us or our situation. Therefore, we can overcome that dark cloud of depression by rehearsing all the promises God has given us. We have to fight the good fight of faith when we are in a trial (1 Tim. 6:12). Verses 11-21 are directed toward the Lord. Job was so terrified from his nightmares that he preferred death rather than life (7:14,15).

“What is man, that thou shouldest ... visit him every morning, and try him every moment.” God has set His heart upon man and is testing him every moment (Job 7:17-18; Psa.11:4). We are being observed by God continually! Character is proven by our responses in times of pressure and pain. *Character is always related to pain!* Anyone can praise the Lord when life is flowing along smoothly but what do we do when the heat is on? This determines whether or not we are a person of character! Will we look to God for *grace* in our time of need, or will we become bitter? God is earnestly looking for a man or woman whose heart is perfect toward Him (2 Chron.16:9).

## **“I Would Harden Myself in Sorrow”**

Before we leave Job's first rebuttle, I want to focus on one more thing Job said, because this particular remark shows that his testimony is beginning to deteriorate. Job was trying to find comfort in his misery *by hardening his heart*. This is one of man's greatest tendencies but it can be fatal if it is not corrected. When we are hurting, we try to deaden the pain by hardening ourselves, but this leads to the pit of despair. It feels good for a time but it is a *false comfort*, and it will lead to destruction.

### **Hardness of Heart—False Comfort**

In 6:10, Job said: “Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I would harden myself in sorrow.” Hardening the heart is a wrong defense mechanism in man in an attempt to protect himself from hurt, and to comfort himself in his sorrow. This same thought is found in Genesis 27:42 where Esau, to “comfort himself” from his injury of losing the birthright, purposed in his heart to kill his brother Jacob. One woman said, “It feels so good to hate my husband after all he has done.” To harden our hearts when we are hurt is a *natural* inclination of man, but it is not a *spiritual* inclination.

### **A Hardened Heart Ruins a Person**

When the heart becomes hardened, it becomes *insensitive* to others and to God. Bitterness festers and grows, then rebellion enters. People become reckless and careless, and if the heart continues to harden itself, it could even lead to suicide. Job was starting to become bitter, and *from this point on he is going to begin to point the finger at God and charge Him with irresponsibility*. Later, God is going to reprove him for this. Not correcting God is the central theme of the book.

## **BILDAD'S FIRST DISCOURSE**

### **Chapter 8**

In 8:3, Bildad makes a correct statement about God but then suggests in verse 4 that Job's children died as a result of their sins. “Job, IF you were righteous God would make you prosperous!” (8:6). In verse 13, he labels Job a hypocrite. Bildad quoted many proverbs and truisms to Job, but they were not applicable to his situation, and it only made matters worse.

Many of Bildad's comments to Job were true sayings, such as the statement found in 8:7. “Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.” Then in verse 20 he said: “Behold God will not cast away a perfect man.” These and numerous other declarations made by the three friends are true enough but they were not relevant to Job's predicament. Even so, God could quicken any of these verses and give them to us for direction, reproof, or promise.

A REMINDER: Everything Job's friends say will fall into one of three categories. Try to discern, by God's grace, into which category each remark should fit.

- Some things they say are right.
- Some things they say are wrong. [Some are very wrong.]
- Some things they say are *not* appropriate for Job's situation, although they are true statements.

## JOB'S SECOND ANSWER Chapters 9 – 10

In his second reply Job was beginning to depart from the anointing by attacking God's character. Months have dragged on since the trial began and he has managed to keep his spirit under control. Now discouragement and hardness have set in and he begins to charge the Lord with irresponsibility.

*“He multiplieth my wounds without cause” (9:17).*

*“He destroyeth the blameless and the wicked” (9:22).*

*“If the scourge slay suddenly, He will laugh at the calamity of the innocent” (9:23).*

Job was allowing everything he was feeling to come out! It was obvious to his friends that what Job was *now* saying about God was very wrong. However, they did not have the solution to his situation. Their diagnosis and attitudes had not been right, and they had misjudged Job in his circumstances. They had closed Job's heart to the point that he looked upon them as enemies. Now he was incapable of receiving any more of their advice.

### **The Answer is Near Us—It is in Our Own Mouths**

In 9:4, Job said: “Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?” Job did not realize that what he had just said was a warning for *himself*. Job did not recognize that he was hardening his heart against God and the Holy Spirit was trying to caution him. Usually the Scriptures we love most are warnings to us. We should pay particular attention to what proceeds from our own lips when we preach, pray, or prophesy. The Spirit is seeking to tell us something about ourselves.

In 9:20, once again we see that the answer to Job's need was in his own mouth, still he could not perceive it. He said: “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.” Job's problem during his trial was that he found no fault in himself, but he did find fault with God. In doing so, he was making himself more righteous than God. He ended up justifying himself, and condemning God (cf. Job 32:2, 35:2). Thus, we see the problem of *blindness*, even in the choicest of saints.

### **Job Complains—God is Not a Man and Does Not Understand**

Job complained that God is not a man as he, and wishes for a “*daysman*” (9:32-33). A daysman is a *referee* or *mediator*. Job wanted a mediator between himself and God, someone made of the same clay. Job was saying, “God is not a man as I am and He does not understand how I feel!” Of course, this is a common complaint of mankind in general. Therefore, God granted him his request a little later on when He anointed Elihu, a fourth man, to speak to him. (Elihu was present among the three friends and Job, but elected to remain silent. He was waiting for God's time.) Later he comes into view in chapters 32-37. In 33:6, Elihu spoke up and said to Job, “I am the mediator you requested! I also am made out of the same thing you are. And now I will speak to you on God's behalf.”

Later in history, God did become a man! “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Christ experienced temptation in every way man does. Never again can it be said that God does not understand man. The *incarnation* allowed God to be made of the same substance as ourselves. Therefore, God was once a teenager. He was conceived out of wedlock, for Joseph and Mary were only engaged at that time. Man can never say that God does not understand! God became one of us in every respect! Today He is still a man, and He will be a man for all eternity (1 Tim. 2:5; 3:16).



## God Cannot Explain Now

In 10:2, Job asks God, “Why are you contending with me?” [Lord, what have I done wrong; what do you want me to do?]. But God remained silent. How the Lord longed to speak. Yet of necessity, He knew He must wait! Sometimes if God explained what He was doing and what He was getting at, it would injure us and disrupt the work He is doing in our lives. It takes great character and restraint on God's part *not* to speak. God has a precise time to speak to us (Ecc. 3:7). There is also a time *not* to speak! God's wisdom keeps us in the furnace for *exactly* the right amount of time (Mal. 3:3). He controls the refiners fire. Our faith is being purified as silver and gold (cf. 1 Pet.1:7; Jas.1:3).

## God Suffers Most

“*In all their affliction He was afflicted*” (Isa. 63:9). When we suffer, God is also suffering. This truth is often overlooked. During the trial God was suffering too. It was painful for God to stand by silently while one of His finest servants endured the furnace of affliction. Although God was also suffering, He delayed the answer in His wisdom. God had to perform important eternal redemptive workings in Job's heart. Therefore, He waited in love (Isa. 30:18).

WE SUFFER MOST IN A TRIAL WHEN:

- ◆ God is silent.
- ◆ Friends misunderstand.
- ◆ We have the pressure of an unsure outcome.
- ◆ Physical and mental stresses wear us down.

## ZOPHAR'S FIRST DISCOURSE

### Chapter 11

Now Zophar speaks and is very abrasive. “Should a man full of talk be [vindicated]? Should thy [babble] make men hold their peace? And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?” (11:2-3). Every one of us has dealt harshly with others, especially when we could not perceive what they were up against or what they were feeling. If we could see the evil powers that are arrayed against people, we would be much more merciful. Certainly, Job had been erring foolishly with his tongue, but the brethren did not answer him discreetly, nor did they have the answers he needed! In spite of the blunders of Job's friends, God was *using* their ignorance and accusations to provoke a problem in Job, and bring it to the surface. Then God could deal with Job's problem.

(11:6) “Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.” (Job, you deserve even more judgment than this. Your punishment is lenient.) This was a serious charge that Zophar was making against Job. Zophar is assuming to be God's representative and is speaking wrongly on behalf of God.

God had said, “Job is perfect and upright, one that feared God and shunned evil.” In 11:13-20, Zophar echoes the same views as the other two friends—that if Job would repent, God would have mercy and restore him to blessing. The three brethren have degenerated from being *reprovers* to *revilers*. Scripture tells us to “reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering” (2 Tim. 4:2). But the brethren had lost control and were now *reviling*. How easy it is to resort to this!

## DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN REPROVING AND REVILING

### Reproving

*versus*

### Reviling

**REPROVE**—To tell someone his fault.  
To admonish, to convince one of his error,  
to give evidence, to convict.

**EXHORT**—To beg, to urge, to encourage,  
to request, to ask, to appeal to, to console,  
to cheer up, to call to one's side and urge  
to pursue a course of action.

**REVILE**—To reproach, denounce, to insult  
to taunt, to chide. To speak evil of, to vilify,  
to be abusive.

**RAIL**—To vilify, speak irreverently of, to  
defame, to speak evil.

From Basic Youth Conflicts

(11:6) Zophar's remarks are very scathing. He said that Job had received a light sentence for all his sins. This was cruel and uncalled for, and he is *reviling* Job. Instead of convincing Job, he is condemning him. Herein we see the difference between a reprover and a reviler. Later, the three friends were rebuked by the fourth man, Elihu (cf. Job 32:3,12).

Sometimes Christians are unwise by the *manner* in which they take a stand against evil. I believe it is a mistake for the Church to copy *the ways* of the world when it speaks out against the evils of the day. Protests, marches, and civil disobedience are not God's way. Even Jesus did not demonstrate in the streets (Isa. 42:2). God has called the Church to be the head, not the tail (Deut. 28:13). The Church should be the leader, not the follower.

In addition to copying the tactics of the world, the Church is also on the enemy's home turf when it takes to the streets. God never told the Church to correct the world. Judgment must *first* begin at the house of God. God will deal with the world when the Church is in order (2 Cor. 10:6; 1 Cor. 5:12,13). When the Church comes into order, God will again make her the head and not the tail.

## JOB'S THIRD ANSWER

### Chapters 12 - 14

In 12:2, Job becomes sarcastic—“When you die, wisdom will die, for you have all the answers” [paraphrase]. He was also troubled with self-doubt—“I am not inferior to you” (12:3). Job is becoming more and more defensive. All of Job's remaining pride and self-life was being devoured in the furnace of affliction.

Job's trial is called a *captivity* (42:10). Job said; “He shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening” (12:14). When God shuts a man up in a trial, no one can get him out until God's appointed time of release. I want to repeat this—there are times when the deliverance minister or evangelist cannot release a person from a bondage or a situation because God has *an appointed time* for the deliverance.

## Jeremiah Had “Job's” Experience

(Lamentations Chapter 3)

God leads His people into dark experiences at times to do something very special in their hearts. Afterwards, He leads them out again into the light (Mic. 7:8). Jeremiah attests to this in Lamentations: “*He hath set me in dark places*” (Lam. 3:6, cf. Isa. 50:10).

“*He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy*” (Lam. 3:7).

“*When I cry and shout he shutteth out my prayer*” (Lam. 3:8). Dark experiences are not necessarily because of anything we have done wrong. They are ordained of God (Isa. 42:16; Job 23:14) and their purpose is to bring us into new blessings. God will surely bring us into a new day (Psa. 30:5,11).

### Could We Handle Full Liberty Today?

God does not deliver us from all our problems *immediately*. *This is for our safety*. He purposely leaves certain problems in our lives for a time to act as restraints until we are able to use liberty responsibly. Liberty is dangerous if we are not ready for it. Freedom could easily ruin us. God removes our problems and difficulties (one by one) as we are able to handle liberty in a mature way (Gal. 5:13). Liberty will be used for the flesh if we are not deeply consecrated to God. Today, America has abused liberty and freedom, and uses it for the flesh.

It is the Lord's mercy to us that He does not deliver us from every problem at once. God allowed Saul to chase David for a number of years. David was under pressure for so long that at one point he said: “*I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul*” (1 Sam. 27:1). David felt overwhelmed. He was tempted to think that at any moment he would surely succumb to the pressures he was feeling. God was using *a problem, a pressure, a thorn*, to work out something special in David. When that work was accomplished in David's heart (humility, brokenness, dependence on God), God removed the problem (Saul). God deals with our “enemy” after something changes in our heart (Prov. 16:7.)

If God gave you your desired miracle today, would it draw you closer to Him, or would it take you away from Him? What would you do if God delivered you instantly from every nagging problem in your life right now? What if the Lord removed every restraint from your life today?

Suppose you had all the money you wanted and all the control you wanted, with no one to be accountable to and no one to question you? And suppose you had no problems with your health? Would you continue to depend on God and walk humbly with God? Would you stay on course and continue to seek God earnestly? No! Probably none of us would! What brought us to God in the first place? Usually it was a problem—sickness, loneliness, emptiness, marital problems, and a deep sense of guilt. Knowing these things, we ought to entrust our lives into the hands of a faithful God and believe that He will deliver us from all our difficulties *in His time* and *in His way*. God has promised to drive out all of our enemies “*little by little*” (Ex. 23:30).

### “Physicians of No Value”

(13:4). “*Physicians of no value.*” Job was saying, “You do not have the remedy for my troubles.” There was a lot of *name calling* being exchanged by all parties. In verse 4, Job said to his friends: “*Ye are forgers of lies.*” Then Job told his friends that wisdom for them would be to say nothing at all (13:5).



(13:7). “Will you speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him?” Most of the exhortations and counsel the three friends presented to Job was *not* prompted by the Spirit of the Lord, and God was displeased. They were not authorized by God to say these things. They spoke presumptuously in God's name and misrepresented Him. God had elected to be silent during Job's trial, and when God is silent, man should be silent. Later, Elihu rebuked them, as also did the Lord (see 32:3; 42:7-8).

It is interesting to note that all the sins that are committed in the Book of Job are *sins of the tongue*. Sins of the tongue are just as serious as sins committed by act or deed, but most people are not really convinced of this fact. The Book of Job is a book that emphasizes the seriousness of what we utter (Mt.12:37; Prov.18:21).

### **Job Shows Some Defiance**

(13:15). “Though he would slay me, yet I will wait for Him. I will maintain and argue and defend my ways before Him, even to His face” (AMP, NIV). Job is actually defending himself in God's face. Job was saying in effect, “I have done nothing wrong! God has not been fair in the way He has dealt with me, and I will defend my ways right to His face.” Here, in a capsule form, is the problem— Job had not been committing any evil in his life so as to procure all his misfortune as his friends suggested. Yet, in his trial he began to attack the Lord's integrity. While finding fault with God, he found none with himself. Thus, he made himself more righteous than God, and this is where he erred!

### **Further Accusations Against God**

(13:24-27). These complaints are accusations against God. Elihu was present and heard these. Later, Elihu cites these bitter remarks and tells Job: “In this thou art not just” (33:8-12).

### **Man's Glory Fades Like a Flower**

(14:2). Looking at his deplorable condition, Job declares, “Man is like a flower that withers.” Truly this had been his experience! (cf. Isa. 40:6-8). Job had been stripped of all his glory and reputation. He was like a flower that had withered. Severe trials are for the purpose of leaving an indelible mark of *humility* upon us (Psa. 39:11). This humility will bring us to exaltation (1 Pet. 5:6). This gives us reason to rejoice in our times of trouble (Jas.1:2-4).

## **SECOND DISCOURSE OF ELIPHAZ**

### **Chapter 15**

(15:5). “Thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty.” Here we have another exchange of accusation and name calling. Eliphaz has felt insulted. Thus, he is getting back at Job. His pride was upset because Job had not accepted his philosophy and counsel. By this time the three friends had long forgotten the original purpose for visiting Job, which was to help and comfort him. Now they have taken sides. Here again is hurt pride, “Dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? What knowest thou that we know not?” (15:8-9). Not only was every one's spiritual pride upset, tempers were flaring too!

## **Pride—The Cause of Argument and Debate**

The Book of Job is about arguments and sins committed by the tongue of the redeemed. Argument is rooted in pride. “*Only by pride cometh contention*” (Prov.13:10). In Romans 12:3, we are exhorted “not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought.” This is the reason for all arguments—people have too high an opinion of themselves. Therefore, when they offer their advice and it is not accepted, they feel insulted and retaliate. “What knowest thou, that we know not? what understandest thou, which is not in us?” (15:9).

The three friends had an abundance of intellectual and spiritual pride; therefore, they became very upset when their counsel was not received. This is an age-old problem with man—the need for true humility! Men and women who possess genuine humility of mind and heart are not insulted and hurt when their advice is not appreciated or received.

## **Old Age—Not Necessarily a Sign of Wisdom**

(15:10). “With us are both the grayheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father.” These brethren were much older than Job, even older than Job's father. Eliphaz claims that because of their age and experience, they had the answers and that Job should be listening to their counsel. Unfortunately, old age does not guarantee anyone wisdom (32:5-9). Sometimes older people have never learned their lessons in life. God can train anyone at any age, and give him a true ministry.

Then Eliphaz speaks correctly. He exhorts Job not to let his heart run away with him. He warns: “Do not turn your spirit against God and *let such words go out of thy mouth*” (15:12,13). Job's passions were running wild and he was blurting out everything he was feeling. Difficult trials bring out the worst in us. Yet trials are necessary because they bring things to the surface so that we may face them. However, even when God clearly confronts people, often they refuse to face the issues.

## **JOB'S FOURTH ANSWER**

### **Chapters 16 - 17**

#### **Power of the Tongue**

(16:1-2). Job scoffs—“Miserable comforters are ye all.” If I were in your place and you were in mine “*I would strengthen you with my mouth*” (16:4-5). The mouth can build up or tear down (19:2; 4:4). There is tremendous power in the tongue. The tongue is by far the most powerful member of our body because spiritual forces are released from the mouth (cf. Jas. 3:1-12).

#### **Job Continues to Sin With His Lips**

(16:9). “*He teareth me in His wrath, Who hateth me. He gnasheth upon me with His teeth; mine Enemy sharpeneth His eyes upon me.*” Now Job is growing very indignant against the Lord. This is the only real blemish in Job's life. He is accusing God of hating him and being his enemy. He is charging God with having hatred in His heart, and of being hard and cruel. We should take heed to ourselves not to resort to this when we are under pressure, because at times we will be tempted to utter unwisely everything we are *feeling*. Remember—God is suffering with us. At the beginning of his trial, Job did not sin with his lips or charge God foolishly. Now he is sinning with his lips.

## **Job Was Not Backslidden**

Job's testimony has deteriorated to some degree as the trial has lengthened into long months. At first Job did not sin with his lips or charge God foolishly (1:22, 2:10), but now he *is* sinning with his lips and he *is* charging God foolishly. Even so, he is not cursing God or renouncing his faith as Satan said he would. Job is depressed. Some of his words are very unspiritual, but he is *not* cursing God. Do not label Job a backslider. Others who have had to suffer in the crucible have been labeled “backslidden” by some today, but this reflects spiritual shallowness. One pastor taught that if you were sick, you were unspiritual and had no faith . . . until he got sick and had to see a doctor.

(17:6). Job feels that God has made him a *byword*. I believe with all my heart that the Lord is willing to sacrifice our reputation and everything else we have in order to do an eternal redeeming work in our hearts. Then God recompenses us lavishly in the end, as He says by the prophet Joel: “*He will restore unto you the years*” which have been devoured by the devourers (Joel 2:25).

(17:11). “My days are past, my purposes are broken.” Job never expected to see good again. He believed he was going to an early grave (17:11-16). Dark clouds of depression are like that! Everything seems hopeless. But when God shines through the dark clouds with the rays of His glory, oh how our outlook can change. When God turned Job's captivity, it was as though a bad nightmare had vanished. After this, he lived an additional 140 years—in peace, prosperity, and honor.

## **BILDAD'S SECOND DISCOURSE**

### **Chapter 18**

(18:3). Bildad was vindictive. He was insulted and offended, and he lets it be known: “Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight?” Then in the remainder of his discourse, he speaks of the judgments that come upon the wicked; and, of course he is applying them to Job.

(18:4). “*He teareth himself in his anger.*” Despondent and dejected by his circumstances and the insensitivity of his brethren, Job seemed almost violent and raving as he attempted to state his case. Remember 6:26. Try to be a good listener. Help the one in affliction to be calm. Hysteria must be conquered before a person can have faith. Everyone must learn to rule his spirit (Prov.16:32).

## **JOB'S FIFTH ANSWER**

### **Chapter 19**

(19:1-2). “*How long will you vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words.*” Words are powerful! Words are *spirit* (not just vocal sounds) and they affect our spirit. Many of the problems and complexes we battle against go back to wrong words that were planted in our minds many years ago.

(19:3). “*These ten times have ye reproached me.*” On ten separate occasions, Job's friends had misjudged and condemned him. Ten is the number of *trial*. God was using the faults and incompetency of these brethren to get at something in Job. God was still choosing to be silent. It is *God's silence* that is the most painful aspect of any trial (19:7).

(19:8-12). Job recounts all that God had done to him. His family and friends had turned against him (19:13-19). He pleads for mercy from the brethren and longs to be understood, but is not (19:21).

## Though Silent God is Present

(19:23-24). Job wishes that his words were recorded and printed in a book! (God gave him his request; we have the book of Job). Although God was silent, He was *ever present* with Job in the furnace of affliction, and was listening carefully to every word. Later, God rebuked both Job and the three friends for their maligning words. It is a comfort to know that the Lord is with us during our trials, even when He chooses to remain silent.

### Job's Vision of the Second Coming, Resurrection, and Millennium

(19:25-27). *“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eye shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.”*

After all that Job had been through, the fire of faith still burned strongly in his heart. Before the onset of his trial, Job had received personal promises from God which urged him to live circumspectly. Job had been given a glimpse of eternity. He saw himself clothed with a glorious resurrected body in the Millennial age—and he saw His Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, standing on the earth.

Job had a *sense of destiny* because of the promises he had received from God and because he saw eternity. Job understood by revelation that he was going to be resurrected to reign with Christ in the Millennium. What was the purpose of his trial?—Job was going through his own “great tribulation” in order to be purified and made ready to rule and reign with Christ in the Millennium. Therefore, Job is sometimes called *the Millennium saint*.

### Job—A Type of the Church in Tribulation

Job is a type of the last-day Church. The end-time Church must pass through the great tribulation in order to wash her robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb (cf. Rev. 7:14). It is in tribulation that patience is made perfect (Rev. 13:10; 14:12; Jas. 1:2-4; 5:11, Rom. 5:3). The Church that has “made herself ready” and been “arrayed in fine linen” is the Church that has just come out of great tribulation (Rev. 19:7-8).

Not every Christian will participate in the first resurrection. Not every believer will rule and reign with Christ in the Millennium. God is not going to give the throne of rulership to spiritual infants or to those who have not submitted to His refining fires (Heb. 12:5-8). The throne is only for men and women who have overcome. “If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12). All of the promises of God have *conditions* (Heb. 10:36; Rev. 21:7) and this is often not understood.

### Importance of Vision

It is so important to understand what we are pressing toward and to set our eyes on the mark. What is the goal and what is the prize of the high calling of God? It is to have a better resurrection and to make it into the Millennium (Phil. 3:10-14; Rev. 20:6; Heb. 11:35). People who lack real vision have no sense of destiny and they dwell carelessly (Prov. 29:18). We should ask God for a vision of the prize that is set before us. When we see the *prize*, the *price* will seem very small!

## ZOPHAR'S SECOND DISCOURSE

### Chapter 20

(20:3). Zophar is very vindictive too. He also has felt insulted. “I have felt the check of my reproach.” “The spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer.” That is exactly how they spoke—with the spirit of their own understanding. He accuses Job of being a hypocrite: “The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment” (20:5). Above all, he asserts that Job's calamity was “the portion of a wicked man from God, the heritage appointed unto him by God” (20:27-29).

## JOB'S SIXTH ANSWER

### Chapter 21

Job argues that sometimes the wicked prosper in this short life on earth. His appraisal is correct. Many of the verses in 21:7-25 contradict today's theology. There are times when the righteous suffer greatly, and other times when the wicked prosper in this life. Call to mind the difficulties devout Christians in Siberia and China have endured. Consider others in concentration camps and prisons in other parts of the world where Christianity is hated. If our theology is true, it will work anywhere on earth. Some of the finest “gold” on earth comes forth from places of persecution and trouble—(e. g. - Corrie Ten Boom, Watchman Nee).

### Prosperity Can Be a Curse

There are times when prosperity can actually be a curse. Prosperity can make people forget God (Deut. 6:10-12; 8:7-14). “Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him (Job 21:14-15). Job sums it up well in 21:23-25 saying, “*One dieth in full strength being wholly at ease and quiet ... another dieth in bitterness of soul and never eateth with pleasure.*” One wicked person has great prosperity. Another wicked person has one woe after another. Some of the wicked are as happy as can be and seem to get away with murder.

A man's spirituality cannot be measured by *material prosperity*. Remember the account of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk.16:19-31). Lazarus had a miserable life on earth. He was poor, sick, undernourished, and an outcast in society. Yet he had made the Lord his refuge and now he enjoys everlasting life. The rich man had everything a mortal could want in life, but he felt no need for God. He died in his sins and is now suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

### When God Has “Given Up” On People, He Ceases to Correct Them

It is not a blessing when *everything* always goes our way. We should thank God when He shuts a door or upsets our plans! One man said, “Every door that God has shut for me was only a prison door anyway!” In other words, if he had succeeded in getting what he pursued, he would have regretted being locked into it and wanted to escape. God alone knows what will make us happy; we do not! Do not become bitter against God if He does not allow you to take a certain path! Whom the Lord loves He chastens, corrects, and disciplines (see Job 5:17; Prov. 3:11-12; Heb.12:5-7; Rev. 3:19). When God ceases to correct a person, it means that He has *given up* on him. When He continues to rebuke us, it is a sign that He still cares. The rod of God is not upon those whom God does not love (Job 21:9). The Lord allows some people to go their own way and does not correct them.



To be transformed from the person we are requires new and unfamiliar circumstances. Change often involves *pain*. This is the reason people resist change. We would rather be comfortable and secure. In our natural selves, we do not like to live by faith. We want to know beforehand how everything is going to work out! We want everything explained to us first! We prefer something that is visible and *tangible*. But faith requires a step into the unknown. In actuality, the life of faith is the most secure way to live because when you obey the Lord, He takes care of you!

### **THIRD DISCOURSE OF ELIPHAZ**

#### **Chapter 22**

(22:3). Eliphaz speaks erroneously for God—“*Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?*” Obviously God takes pleasure in those who are upright (Psa. 11:7). Then he goes much too far in 22:5-10, defaming Job's character.

(22:5). “*Are not thine iniquities infinite!*” [Job, your sins are so many they are beyond numbering]. Once again, Eliphaz is reviling Job rather than reproving him. God had previously said that there was no one on earth more righteous than Job. The counseling session has become a battlefield, and the participants are bludgeoning each other.

(22:22-30). Job is again exhorted to turn back to God. His friends assure him that if he will repent, then God will restore mercy and blessing. However, they are failing to touch the crux of the matter.

### **JOB'S SEVENTH ANSWER**

#### **Chapters 23 - 24**

#### **Job Says—“God Would Take My Side”**

(23:3-7). “*O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be [acquitted] forever [by] my judge.*”

Job longed for a fair hearing before God. He wanted to present his case to God, and he believed that God would rule in his favor. Job believed he knew how God would respond to him, but Job was in for the shock of his life. When God finally did come on the scene in chapters 38-42, it was nothing at all as he expected. God came with a stern rebuke. Here is the whole problem of mankind—man thinks he knows what he needs, but man is very mistaken.

#### **We Do Not Know What We Need**

What we need to hear, and what we *think* we need to hear are two different things. Job knew that he had not committed any sins that warranted his catastrophe. He knew that his friends had misjudged him, and he was looking for vindication from God. However, he was still missing the point. Job had been criticizing the Most High! He had condemned God and said that He had perverted justice. Yet Job found no fault with himself. This was his error. Job was blind to his problem. Therefore, God was prolonging his trial so that his problem would keep coming out of his mouth until he could *see* it.

When I was a teenager I suffered from a herniated disc in my lower spine. This injury caused excruciating pain to run down the right leg, since the bulging disc was pushing against nerve roots going down the legs. At first I did not know what was wrong. The pain went even to the toes. I thought I had a leg problem but it all started in the lower spine. Amazingly, there was little pain in the spine. Can you imagine my surprise when I was told that a pain in my foot came from my lower back.

The lesson that I learned as a seventeen year old has stayed with me to this very day. It carries a profound message. We know where we are hurting, but often we do not know *the source* of the problem. Diagnosis is difficult. When I was told that my problem stemmed from something else, I was quite upset. Job was expecting God to say one thing, but instead the Lord came from an entirely different direction and Job was stunned. We think we know what we need, and we think we know what God would say—but God sees our situation very differently (Isa. 55:8,9).

### **Another Declaration of Faith—“I Shall Come Forth as Gold”**

23:10 is a classic verse: “*He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold.*” Faith was burning in Job's heart. Here he was, a mass of boils. Young people kicked him; others would laugh at him and mock him. Job was a helpless wreck of humanity that everybody despised. Yet in the midst of all this he had this declaration of faith—“God is going to bring me forth as pure gold.” He understood that he was being *refined as gold* of any remaining mixture during his fiery trial. God was preparing Job to reign with Him forever (19:25-27).

(23:12). “*I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.*” Job loved the Word of God and the voice of God (cf. Jer.15:16). This was more important to him even than natural food. His hunger and thirst was for *righteousness* more than for food (Mt. 5:6). He had abstained from worldly appetites and the lusts of the flesh in order that his spiritual appetite would be keen for the Word of God. Job was a man of prayer and fasting. He spent much of his time and life *seeking* God.

(23:13-14, cf. 3:25). “*For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me.*” This is further evidence that Job knew beforehand that a trial was coming. Job understood that the Lord had ordained this trial and that it was a path he had to tread. Thus, it is God who foreordains our every *trial and blessing*.

(23:16). “*For God maketh my heart soft.*” Trials are for the purpose of making men and women more mellow. Suffering takes away harshness! When we have not suffered enough, our ability to understand is shallow, and we are insensitive to the anguish of others.

In chapter 24, Job speaks of the ways of the wicked. He is saying that the wicked *seem* to get away with everything, but ultimately they will come to nothing and be judged (24:23-24). His evaluation is correct!

### **BILDAD'S THIRD ANSWER Chapter 25**

Bildad speaks in *generalities*. His remarks are just a few sententious sayings. They are true enough, but irrelevant to Job's need. He emphasizes the holiness of God and the unclean state of man, but still does not *pinpoint* Job's problem.



## JOB'S EIGHTH ANSWER Chapters 26 - 31

(26:1-4). In these verses Job tells Bildad that his counsel has accomplished *nothing*. Verses 5-14 indicate their knowledge and understanding of creation. They had extraordinary knowledge!

(26:14). “*These are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him.*” Job says that our understanding of the ways of God is very limited. At the same time Job had been criticizing God's wisdom. In doing so, he was making himself wiser than God. To find fault with God is to say that you know more than God, and that you can manage things better. It is amazing that a person can quote Scriptures and still have no idea that those very verses apply to needs *in himself* more than in anyone else. Job's answer was in his own mouth, yet he could not hear or perceive it.

### Closing in on Job's Problem

(27:1-4). “As God liveth, who hath taken away my [justice]; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul; All the while my breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my nostrils; My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.” Now we are closing in on *the root* of Job's problem. He finds fault with God but none with himself. He condemns God but justifies himself, putting his righteousness and wisdom above God's. Job had just contradicted himself. In one breath he condemns the Lord and in the next breath he says he will never sin with his lips.

- Putting God Down — 27:2 “*As God liveth who hath taken away my justice and vexed my soul.*”
- Lifting Up Himself — 27:3,4 “*My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue deceit.*”

(27:5-6). “Til I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. *My righteousness* I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.” Job finds no fault in himself, but finds fault with God. He was ready to defend his position, even unto death. Job is being very obstinate. During my years of dealing with people, I have been amazed to see men broken in health, broken in finance, broken in marriage, and broken in reputation—but not broken in spirit.

Elihu, (the silent listener and onlooker) bore witness as Job and the three friends argued on, each one explaining the ways of God from “superior insight.” God was preparing Elihu to speak. In the remainder of chapter 27, Job continues to defend himself.

### Self-Righteousness—An Idol

Job had made an idol of *his* righteousness. Was he righteous? Yes! Even God said he was righteous. But when he found fault with God and none with himself, he was *self-righteous*. Self-righteousness is unrighteousness. Observe how many times he says “*my* righteousness,” not God's! Remember, if man possesses any goodness at all, it is because God imparted it to him. Righteousness does not originate in man. God alone broke the bondages of our sins. His attitude should have been something like this—“Lord, any righteousness I possess came from you! I have tried (by your grace) to be righteous and holy, but please show me where am I still blind and what am I yet lacking”. It would be good to memorize the following Scriptures: (Isa. 54:17; 64:6; Rev. 15:4; Dan. 9:7; Phil. 3:9). “*Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee.*”

## **Job's Discourse on Wisdom Chapter 28**

This chapter records Job's great discourse on *wisdom*. Job had received an impartation of wisdom by living in God's presence. Man cannot find true wisdom because it is *hidden* (1 Cor. 2:7-8). All of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are *hidden* in Christ. Man searches everywhere for wisdom and the true meaning of life, but he is unable to find it without first honoring the One from whom all wisdom comes. Christ Himself *is* wisdom (1 Cor.1:30; Col. 2:3). If we know Christ intimately, we will understand life because He created life. (Verses 12, 20, and 28 are key verses for the chapter).

(28:12). “*Where shall wisdom be found?*” Verse 28 gives us the answer: “*Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*” Reverence for God and obedience to his law is the key to having wisdom. Disobedience and rejection of the truth snuffs out the light in man. Paul says “*their foolish heart was darkened*” (Rom.1:21-22; Mt. 6:23). Wisdom and understanding are God's gifts to the righteous, but God deprives the wicked of understanding (see Deut. 4:1-6; Dan.12:10). Real wisdom answers all the dilemmas of the heart!

The vulture's eyesight is very sharp but he cannot see the path of wisdom (28:7). Wisdom is hidden from every living creature (28:13-14). Destruction and death are evil spirits. They know the fame of wisdom, and they fear wisdom (28:22). Wisdom delivers men from death and destruction. Job, with all of his insight on wisdom, still had areas in his life where wisdom was not reigning.

## **Job Reminisces Over His Past Glory Chapter 29**

(29:2). “*Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me.*” Job reminisces over his past life, his righteous deeds, and the honor he had before the trial. He wishes he could go back in time and just stay there. He is saying, “Look where I used to be, and now look where I have fallen.” When we are in a dark trial our minds often revert to happier times.

(29:3) - God was with me then, His glory was upon me. I knew His secrets (29:4). My children were gathered around me and we were so happy (v5). Dignitaries respected me (29:6-11). I was generous to the poor; I defended the helpless. (29:12-17). My presence was revered by everyone. My opinions and my counsel were much sought after (29:18-25). Job had been a very mighty man.

## **Job Compares His Past Glory With His Present State Chapter 30**

(30:1). “*But now they that are younger than I have me in derision.*” Job compares his present deplorable state with his past glory. “They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face” (30:10). Not only was Job on trial, everyone was on trial! The people downtown hated him and spoke against him. His bones ached and he could not sleep (30:17). His boils were running with pus so that his clothes were sticking fast to his skin (30:18). Job cried, “God does not hear me or regard me. He has become cruel to me” (30:20-21). Job had wept for others when they were in trouble, and had shown pity to the poor. But he thought, “What good did it do me? Look at my reward!” “*When I looked for good, evil came*” (30:25-26). He was also very lonely—“I am a brother to jackals, and a companion to owls” (30:28-29).

## There Are Appointed Seasons in our Lives

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

- ◆ God has appointed special times of *blessing* in our lives (mountain-top experiences).
- ◆ God has also foreordained special times of *adversity* to work something out in our hearts.

There is “*a time to break down and a time to build up*” (Eccl. 3:3). God was breaking Job down and He was going to rebuild him a better man. During trials God is changing and restructuring our soul and frame of mind. This is a very painful but necessary work of God. Everything seems to go wrong during this time. In addition to this, the trial lasts *longer* than we anticipated.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF BITTER AND SWEET

There is a principle from Esther 2:12 that we should remember. Esther underwent purification processes before she appeared before the king. These purification processes (presumably of the skin) involved six months treatment with the *oil of myrrh*, and six months of *sweet spices and perfumes*. There is a spiritual truth here that we should observe. *Myrrh* speaks of bitter experiences, and the *sweet spices* speak of pleasant experiences. Both are necessary for purification. Good times are just as essential for our purification as the difficult times. Seasons of blessing and joy cleanse our hearts from hurts and hardness. Do not expect your Christian life to be a road of misery and trials. There will be many blessings too. In fact, the good times will far outweigh the bad times.

## Job Enumerates His Righteous Acts and Deeds Chapter 31

Job was a very righteous and merciful man. Even God gave testimony to this! But when Job was in the fire, a serpent came out and showed its ugly head (cf. Acts 28:3). Something manifested in him that was very displeasing to the Lord. Job had pointed his finger at God and charged Him with irresponsibility, yet he had found no fault with himself. This is where he went too far.

### Moral Purity

(31:1-12). Job was morally pure. He had deep convictions about sexual purity. “I made a covenant with mine eyes: why then should I think upon a maid?” Job had made an agreement with himself. He trained his eyes to focus only where they should. Many sins begin with *the eyes*. Sin gets into the heart by *gazing* upon someone other than your spouse. What you gaze upon becomes your constant meditation. Job was not always eyeing other women. His eyes and emotions were consecrated to God. He walked in the Spirit, not after the sight of his eyes, and he did not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Pornography is said to be as addictive as heroin. If you do not turn off that pornography on the internet *now*, it will destroy your marriage, your career, and your soul.

- Stay away from vulnerable situations, the wrong people, and turn off the internet NOW.
- Do not play with your emotions or the emotions of anyone else. It is *evil* to stir up emotions in another that cannot be satisfied lawfully. Be careful of flattery. Flattery wants something in return.
- Guard your heart (Prov. 4:23) and train your eyes to stay where they belong.
- Allow God to cleanse your heart from evil desires. The power of a habit is in the *love* for it.
- Walk the path of wisdom. Wisdom will keep you. Flee temptation as did Joseph (Gen. 39:10-12).
- Do not live a “private” life. Be in the light and be accountable to others in those areas where you know you are weak.

## **Adultery—Because of Deception**

(31:9). *“If mine heart has been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door.”* Adultery is rooted in deception. It is associated with darkness (cf. Job 24:15-17; Prov. 7:9-10, 5:3). Adultery results from infatuation. In adultery, a stupor envelops a person. When people fall into this sin they have been overtaken by an evil spirit, and the longer they continue to practice this sin, the more entrenched in deception they become. When God does not expose their sin immediately, people begin to feel that God is overlooking it. They think God is making special exceptions for their situation—but they are sadly mistaken.

Adultery brings numerous evil spirits into the heart—betrayal, lying, deceit, hypocrisy, continual cover-ups, and a seared conscience (Prov. 30:20). One minister of a large church was involved with six women in his congregation. When he was confronted with the matter, he was completely blasé about it. Adultery is a treacherous path of darkness. Eventually it will lead to hell if it is not repented of (Prov. 6:26-27).

(31:9-11). These passages show the judgment that comes upon an adulterer. When a man commits adultery, he brings his home under spiritual attack and his wife is left unprotected. Often she falls into the same sin, and others take his wife. Adultery was considered a hideous crime, even before the age of the Law (v11). Adultery can consume all that a man has. He could lose everything (31:12).

## **Job Continues to Defend Himself**

In addition to being morally pure, Job was kind to his servants (31:13-15). He was merciful to the poor and widow (31:16-22). Job never rejoiced when his enemies were judged (31:29-30). He was hospitable (31:32). Job was truly an outstanding man. Yet God was trying to cut away something that was *not* righteous in his life. God was performing a greater work of redemption in him so that He could bless him even more! Job was violating the theme verse—Job 4:17: “Shall mortal man be more just than God; shall a man be more pure than his maker?” In the trial, Job had made himself more righteous than God.

(31:33). *“If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom.”* Here is a remarkable revelation of the incident in the garden of Eden. Adam was very slow to acknowledge his disobedience. He tried to conceal the guilt of his heart. This is a notable trait of all his descendants. Man in general is slow to confess faults or concede to any weaknesses. In actual fact, Job himself was having a very hard time seeing and acknowledging his problem. Remember, there is no release from our bondage until we clearly acknowledge it. As long as we are in a state of denial, we will never be released.

## **End of the Section**

(31:40). Job's words are ended. This concludes Part 2. Part 3 begins as the fourth man, Elihu, now speaks on behalf of God.



# ELIHU'S COUNSEL TO JOB

## Part Three—Chapters 32 – 37

(32:1). “So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.” This is the crux of Job's problem. See Proverbs 16:2; 21:2. “All the ways of a man are clean *in his own eyes*, but the Lord [testeth] the spirits.” When the three friends saw that Job was determined to defend himself to his dying breath, they stopped talking.

In deference to the elder brethren, Elihu waited for the three friends to finish their speaking. Elihu had also waited for something else—God's time. Now he was ready to “burst” from the pressure of holding in the word of the Lord (32:18-20). Before God would come on the scene, He had to prepare Job by first speaking through Elihu. How often God speaks to us *through men* before He visits us personally. Job needed to be *conditioned* for God's appearance. Now Elihu will prepare the way.

### THE FOURTH MAN

Elihu is the silent fourth man. He was much younger than the others, yet keener in spiritual matters. Now the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him and he begins to speak on behalf of God. He is a prophet and also a profound type of Christ. There is evidence within the book of Job that Elihu is the author.

(32:2). Elihu's wrath was kindled against Job “*because he justified himself rather than God.*” This was divine wrath! The Spirit of the Lord was controlling Elihu and God's Spirit in him was angry. When God is offended, the anger is holy. When *we* are offended it is carnal anger (Jas.1:19-20). God's wrath was also kindled against the three friends because they had *condemned* Job without giving him the key to his situation.

(32:3). “Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had *condemned* Job.” You cannot condemn a man without showing him a way out. Elihu said to the three—“There was none of you that *convinced* Job or that answered his words” (32:12).

Most of chapter 32 is Elihu's words to the three friends. In v4-10, the subject of *age* is brought up. The three friends were “very old” but Elihu was young (v6). Old age *in itself* does not qualify anyone to counsel others. Multiplicity of years does not guarantee anyone of having the answers to a situation. “There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (v8). God's Spirit can give the answer to a 20-year-old if He so chooses.

(32:14). “*Neither will I answer him with your speeches.*” Elihu had better spiritual perception and was not going to use the logic of the three men. According to their theology, Job must have sinned because of all the tragedy that had come into his life. Their thinking was—“This could never happen to a righteous man!” But they were wrong!

(32:15-17). Elihu appears to be the one telling the story. “They were amazed, they answered no more: they left off speaking. When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more;) I said, I will answer also my part, I will also show you mine opinion.” Elihu probably is the author of the Book of Job. In 32:21-22, he claims impartiality.



(33:1-5). Turning away from the three men, Elihu now confronts Job. In verse 6 he says: “Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay.” This was in response to Job's complaint in 9:32-33, that God was not a man and therefore could not understand him. At that time, Job requested a “daysman” (umpire / mediator) who could act as a go-between himself and God. Elihu is saying—I am the answer to your request ... I am also made of the same clay as you.

### **Elihu Pinpoints Job's Fault**

(33:7-13). In verse 7, Elihu promises Job he will not be harsh with him: “Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.” Now he is going to *zero in* on Job's problem in verses 8-13.

“Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words saying, I am clean without transgression, I am innocent: neither is there iniquity in me [i. e. - there is no fault in me, but there is fault in God]. Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy, He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths. *Behold in this thou art not just*: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.”

Elihu pinpoints Job's problem . . . “*Behold in this thou art not just*.” Job had been accusing God of “seeking causes against him, and counting him for his enemy.” Verse 12 is the theme of Elihu's message—“*God is greater than man*.” He is saying—“No one can question God or point the finger at Him. In this thou art not just.” And then in 33:13—“*Why do you strive with him?*”

### **Striving With Our Maker is Evil**

Isaiah 45:9 warns: “Woe to him that *striveth* with his Maker ... Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?” Man has no right to demand an explanation from God. To do so is to put God down, and lift ourselves up above Him. The Lord does not have to give an account to anyone. Job had been striving with his Maker and *finding fault* with Him. This is where Job was not just, and God wanted to cleanse him of this. Anyone who will stand close to God cannot have accusation in his heart against Him. It is hypocritical to utter error against the Lord (cf. Isa. 33:6).

Elihu had told the three friends: “*Neither will I answer him with your speeches*” (32:14). Elihu would not use the shallow logic of three brethren. Instead, Elihu's rationale was this—(Job, all these troubles that have come upon you are *not* for anything you have done wrong. But during your trial you have been speaking irreverently *about* God and *to* God—“In this thou art not just.”) This is Elihu's reasoning, and he is right!

### **The Blindness of Man and its Remedy**

(33:14-22). “*For God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not*.” God speaks numerous times to us about serious issues, but so often we do not hear Him. So God tries to speak to us when we are in a subconscious state—while we are sleeping (v15,16). Or he chastens man with strong pain upon his bed and brings him almost to death's doors—all this to withdraw man from his own purposes and routines, and to hide pride from man. All of this is His mercy. Thus, he opens men's ears unto instruction (16-22). Certainly, Job had experienced this!



(34:5). Elihu continues, “*For Job hath said, I am righteous; and God hath taken away my [justice.]*” Elihu sums up Job's problem very well. He felt constrained by the Holy Spirit to rebuke Job because he had heard him condemn God repeatedly and it was making God angry.

### **Calamity is God's Reward to Me For Doing Good**

(34:9-12). “For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God. Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert [justice].”

Job charged that God had perverted justice. Job looked at his calamities and said, “This is God's reward to me for doing right! What good does it do to please God?” Elihu reproves Job for this accusation against God, and said that God will render unto every man what he deserves, and what God metes out will be fair.

Here is the problem—life is not over yet and the final score is not in! People tend to make an appraisal of life by the way conditions look *today*, but in a few years everything could be very different. Job and his friends were looking at the present state of affairs. The friends said Job was reaping what he had sown, and therefore must have sinned grievously. Job knew he had not sinned. He became bitter at God and said—“This is God's reward to me for doing right.” Eventually, God will render to every man according to his works (Rev. 22:12).

At the end, Job had a double portion.

### **Is it Fit to Say to a King—You Are Perverse?**

(34:17-19). “[Can one who hates justice rule]? *and wilt thou condemn Him that is most just?* Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly? How much less [then] to Him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they are all the work of His hands.” He asks Job, “Is it proper to revile earthly dignitaries? Will you then revile and condemn the Most High, Him who is most just?” Elihu is touching the root of Job's problem. Job had been *condemning* the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

### **Elihu's Counsel to Job—“Lord, Show Me Where I Am Blind”**

(34:31-32). “Surely it is [fit] to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.” Elihu counsels Job to pray this prayer, “*That which I see not, teach thou me.*” (Lord, show me where I'm blind.) This is how the three friends should have replied to Job's remarks. “Job, you are criticizing God. Ask God to show you what you cannot see.” Instead, they condemned him.

(34:36-37). [“Would that Job's afflictions be continued and] he be tried to the end, because of his answering like wicked men! For he adds rebellion [in his unsubmissive, defiant attitude toward God] to his unacknowledged sin; he claps his hands [in open mockery and contempt of God] among us, and he multiplies his words of accusation against God.” (AMP version). Elihu desires the pressure to continue until Job sees his fault and acknowledges it.

## “My Righteousness is More Than God's”

(35:2). Elihu continues, “*Thinkest thou this to be right that thou saidst: My righteousness is more than God's?*” Here again is the root of Job's problem . . . “Lord, you are *not fair*. You have no right to put me through this trial. I have done nothing to deserve this!” Job found fault with God, but none with himself. Thus, Job was saying that he was more righteous than God. In verse 2, Job is rebuked again for saying that it does not pay to live a godly life—God treats the righteous and wicked the same.

### Lost Perspective—A Lost Song

(35:9-10). “By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. *But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night.*” When people are in trouble, often they are unable to think or deal objectively. Emotions are out of control and thoughts are distorted.

Job had lost proper perspective during the trial. At first he did admirably. Then he lost the song of his soul (Eph. 5:19-20). Having a song in our soul will break the power of the enemy and keep our wells unblocked. Job's heart had grown hard. He was no longer able to say: “Lord, though I do not understand, I trust you. You do all things well.” Job was unable to thank God in and for his circumstances, and he could not thank God for his offenders (1 Thes. 5:18). Nor did he pray for those who misunderstood him (later he did pray for them in 42:10, and then he was released from his captivity.). He was lacking in meekness too. Meekness is the opposite of anger. It is “a holy acceptance of circumstances.” Instead of accepting his circumstances, he became very angry.

(36:23) Elihu again zeroes in on Job . . . “*Who can say [to God,] thou hast wrought iniquity?*”

(37:19) “*Teach us what we shall say unto him: for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.*” Because we do not see clearly (by reason of darkness), we do not know how to speak. Unless God gives us light and revelation we don't know how to think, counsel, or pray. We cannot see situations clearly because of *a veil*. The three friends were unable to counsel Job because of “darkness.” They were judging him with their natural minds, not by divine light. The real answers come by *divine revelation* only.

### Conclusion of Part Three

Elihu has prepared the way for the Lord to come and visit Job. Now (after a period of perhaps six months to a year) the Lord is about to come on the scene. After many long months of silence, the Lord is about to make an appearance to Job and speak to him. God has waited patiently for the situation to ripen. The Refiner of silver and gold has waited for the impurities to rise to the surface in order to remove them (Mal. 3:3). Now He is ready to come and complete the process.

# JOB BEFORE THE LORD

## Part Four—Chapters 38 – 42

### God Breaks His Silence

38:1-4 “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man: for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding.” God does not sound very happy here. It must have been terrible.

After the long silence, God begins to speak. God will confirm everything Elihu has just said. In the next five chapters, God asks Job about eighty questions. Every time God asks man a question, it is not because He does not know the answer *but that man might see something!* He asked Elijah: “What doest thou here?” “Cain, why is thy countenance fallen?” “Jonah, doest thou well to be angry?” “Where art thou, Adam?” “Saul, why persecutest thou me?” To Jacob He asked: “What is thy name?”

### “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the world?”

(38:4). God asks—“*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the world?*” God is probing him with a long series of mind-boggling questions, none of which he could answer. Job had been criticizing and correcting God, saying, in effect, that he was wiser than God. Therefore, in order for Job to see his own insignificance, God demanded Job to explain some of the unanswerable mysteries of the universe. He wanted Job to fully understand the depths of his folly. God wanted him to realize the utter absurdity of questioning and criticizing the wisdom of the Eternal, Almighty Creator.

While we are still in chapter 38, it is interesting to note that all of the godly inhabitants of heaven shouted for joy when God created the earth. This is not disclosed anywhere else in Scripture. When God laid the foundations of the world and established the cornerstone ... “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (38:5-7).

### “Words Without Knowledge”

“*Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?*” (38:2). Job had been speaking authoritatively of matters he knew nothing about! God was commanding this to cease! Often our theology, counseling, and advice is clouded by “*words without knowledge.*” Paul said, “If any man thinks he knows anything, he knoweth *nothing* yet as he ought to know” (1 Cor. 8:2; Gal. 6:3). The broader our scope of knowledge, the more we realize how little we know. On the other hand, an immature believer thinks he has a good all-around grasp on everything.

### Correcting, Rebuking, and Instructing God

(40:2). “*Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? He that [correcteth] God, let him answer it!*” During the trial Job had been striving with God and correcting Him. (“This is not fair, You are not just! You laugh at the heartaches of the innocent!”) Job had been contesting God's character, and God was calling this to a halt! When a man challenges God, he is putting God down, and also lifting himself up above Him.

## Will You Condemn Me That You May Be Righteous?

(40:8) God speaks—“*Will you condemn me, that you may be righteous?*” This accusatory problem in Job is a problem in us as well, and more than we realize. We make ourselves more righteous and more wise than God when we tell Him —“*It's not fair.*” To continually complain—“it's not fair” is an attack against the Lord. We are really saying, “Lord, YOU are not fair!” Since it is God who allows what comes into our lives, our complaint and bitterness is actually directed toward Him.

### If You Are Greater Than God—Deliver Yourself, Show Me Your Power

(40:10). “*Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty.*” God is making a point to Job. Job is sitting in an ash heap, covered with boils. He is totally powerless to change any of his circumstances. In fact, he is totally powerless to do *anything!* God says to him—“Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his? If you can, then adorn yourself with glory and splendor, and clothe yourself in honor and majesty” (v9-10). God was not trying to mock Job. He wanted Job to see how pathetic it was to correct his Maker.

(40:11-14). God says to Job: “[Pour forth] the fury of your wrath, look at every proud man and bring him low, look at every proud man and humble him, crush the wicked where they stand. Bury them all in the dust together; shroud their faces in the grave. [If you can do this] Then I myself will admit to you that your own right hand can save you.” (NIV).

In chapter 41, the Lord uses a sea creature (leviathan) to further get His point across to Job. This sea monster, presumably a whale (or crocodile), is feared by all. Leviathan himself has no fear. He looks straight in the face of all his foes and backs down from no one. He reigns over all those who are high and proud. The Lord is saying to Job: “Job, you would not dare to stir up this untamed beast, yet you dare to challenge Me, leviathan's Creator. Job, I am the One to fear more than any other.”

### Job Repents

(42:2). Job replies to the Lord: “*I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought [or purpose of Yours] can be [restrained or thwarted].*” Job then *confesses* his error ... “*I have uttered things that I did not understand, things too wonderful [or too high] for me*” (v3). King David had learned this lesson (Psalm 131:1-2).

David testified: “Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child...” (Psa.131:1-2). Oh, for the godly attribute of quietness and silence so that we do not use our feeble knowledge to expound on matters that we know nothing about. Many people “multiply words without knowledge” by trying to predict the future. Pride is often at the bottom of predicting.

(42:5-6). “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Here is the result of any *true* vision—“I abhor myself in dust and ashes.” (cf. Isa. 6:5). Visibly seeing the Lord, Job also saw himself in God's light. In seeing the Lord, he also saw what God saw in him. Then he was delivered. For deliverance, we must see in ourselves what God sees. After Job *saw* his fault, he *confessed* it and was freed of it.

## God Rebukes the Three Friends

After Job confessed his own faults, God dealt with the three friends. (God had no rebuke for Elihu.) Confessing the faults of our offenders does not bring release to us. Only when we confess *our own* evil attitudes can we ever find release. Job could have said, “But God, look at all the wrong things they have done”, but that would never have brought his deliverance. Perhaps God is waiting for something to change in *our* lives first before he deals with our offenders. Now the Lord will sharply rebuke Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, because they had spoken presumptuously on God's behalf, and they had brought great injury to Job. Now, God's “wrath is kindled” against these brethren.

(42:7-9). “And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job.”

### Praying For Offenders Brings Our Own Release

(42:10). “*And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.*” Job prays for his friends. *Praying* for friends who have misunderstood or misjudged our situation helps us gain our freedom from bitterness. Rather than being consumed with anger, we should realize that God wants to help them with their judgmental spirit. By keeping our own attitude right, it opens the door for God to deal with them and help them. We have a responsibility to brethren who have injured us. If bitterness is allowed to overcome us, however, we will lose our ability to act objectively (See Rom.12:21). God turned Job's captivity (or trial) after he prayed for his friends. Forgiveness is an act of the will more than of our feelings.

### Job's Captivity is Turned

“The Lord turned the captivity of Job.” (read Psalm 126.) When the Lord turned Job's captivity, it was as though a bad nightmare had ended. God was making all things new. Only a few months earlier Job thought he would never see good again and would die prematurely.

Not only did the Lord heal him physically, God healed every *relationship* as well. God brought reconciliation between Job and his wife, and restored the favor of all his friends, relatives, and former acquaintances. Every misunderstanding was settled. The Lord also bestowed upon Job many great honors, even giving him twice as much as he had before the trial.

“*The Lord maketh sore, and bindeth up*” (5:18). God allows affliction *only* that He may do an eternal, redeeming work within. Then He heals us. Everything God does is in mercy (Psa. 25:10; Psa.136). Truly He is able to make all things beautiful in His time (Ecc. 3:11). Now I would like to pause for a moment to consider just exactly what Scripture means by “captivity.” Then I would like to discuss the double portion.



## What is Captivity?

*Captivity* is the term Scripture uses to describe trials. Captivity is a period of confinement, darkness, bondage, and confusion in one's life. Captivity is actually a spiritual prison; it is an adverse set of circumstances and situations that have us hedged in. Being in Noah's ark for a whole year was like being in a prison, yet it saved those who were in it. The purpose of captivity is to purge and cleanse. Most of all, God gives us a heart to know Him while we are in captivity (Jer. 24:5-7). Captivity, therefore, is meant for *our blessing*.

God commanded His people to submit to captivity (Jer. 27:12). The message of Jeremiah to his generation was—*submit to captivity*. The majority of God's people (including Jeremiah's fellow-ministers) despised the message. Everyone wanted to hear a message on prosperity and peace. They wanted to hear that they were acceptable to God as they were and that everything was going to be all right, even though this message created false hope (Jer. 5:31; 6:18; 8:11; Isa. 30:10.). In captivity we have to face ourselves honestly and look at the real issues in our lives. Many would rather evade this.

(Jer. 24:5-7) The people were filled with vanity, idols, and pride. God purposed to send His people to Babylon into captivity to deliver them from these sins (cf. Mic. 4:10). To those who would submit to captivity and cleansing God said, “*I will give you a heart to know me.*” Then God promised to bring them back home to normalcy. It is in captivity (difficult times and foreign circumstances) that God gives us a heart to know Him. Job himself received *a new heart* in his captivity.

## How Can Captivity Be Refused?

Captivity can be refused! When we fail the smaller tests, God cannot bring us to bigger ones. Jeremiah said, “If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?” (Jer.12:5). Often people say, “I want a heart like David's, I want to be a man after God's own heart.” But it costs something to have a heart like David's. A heart to know God is given to us *while we are in captivity*. When God brings circumstances into our lives to bring transformation and change, many of us say, “I hate this, I don't want any part of this.” (cf. Heb.12:5-8).

There is something else to consider—only a man with vision and promises from God has the strength to endure captivity. But vision and promises are granted only to *committed* Christians. Therefore, uncommitted believers (who only want to live on the perimeter of what God is doing) *fail to receive* the understanding and strength that is required to bear up in the fiery furnace. When Christians disdain and mock the deeper truths God offers, they are refusing the means by which they could go on unto spiritual fullness. Truly all believers are called to be kings and priests (Rev.1:6; 5:10), yet there are two warnings that underscore how believers may *disqualify themselves* from being kings and priests unto God (see Hos. 4:6; 1 Sam.15:23).

*Commitment* is important for going on with God. Commitment to God is proved by our commitment to man. If we are not faithful to man, it shows that we are not being faithful to God. Today it is common for believers to avoid being *planted* in a local church. This is not only unscriptural, it is dangerous. In removing himself from the authority and protection of the local church, a person becomes easy prey to the enemy and is far more susceptible to deception. To isolate one's self like this is a violation of Hebrews 10:25; 13:17, First Thessalonians 5:12-13, and many other commands of Scripture. In addition to this, being unattached to a body of believers strengthens and glorifies *the ego* more than Christ because an independent and self-centered spirit is produced.

Loners do not allow anyone in their lives that they don't want!—(They have no one to cross their will, and no one who might confront them with the real issues in their hearts.) Loners enclose themselves and carefully protect their private lives from all intrusion. This is the easy, *independent* path, but in closing themselves off from others, the opportunity to remedy the maladies of their hearts is lost. Christian perfection and wholeness is *not* possible without being involved with others (Jn.17:23).

### **Moab—Unchanged From His Youth**

Some men and women never change, and Jeremiah 48:11 tells us the reason. They have never gone into *captivity*. Therefore, the same sins and habits that have dominated them since youth continue.

“Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees [or dregs], and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, *neither hath he gone into captivity*: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.” The Lord likens Moab to wine that is sitting undisturbed in a vessel. This wine has bitter-tasting dregs which have settled on the bottom of the vessel. In order for the wine to become sweet, it has to be poured from one vessel into another. Each time it is emptied from one vessel to another, more of the sediment is separated from the wine. Finally, after being poured many times, the wine is totally free of dregs. The implications of this illustration are applicable to each and every believer.

We are like this wine. There are bad tasting elements in our lives that have to be separated from us. The particular dregs in Moab were pride, loftiness, arrogance, and wrath (cf. Jer. 48:29-30). The process by which these dregs are removed from our lives is in being “emptied from vessel to vessel.” This means being poured from one experience to another. (When liquid is poured into a container, it automatically takes the form of the container. This represents the ability to be adaptable to any situation.) Each time we are poured into a new experience, something of the old life is left behind. However, when people refuse to be poured, and when they refuse captivity, the same offensive elements remain such as anger, pride, and stubbornness. When a senior citizen has the same habits and sins of his youth still intact—you can be sure he has not been through captivity. Jeremiah himself learned to “bear the yoke in his youth” (Lam. 3:25-28). Jeremiah had become his message. This is the reason he could preach about *captivity* with authority.

### **The Reason Men Fail—They Have Not Been in Captivity**

Men and women often crash after God uses them. I believe that the greatest single reason for downfalls is a faulty foundation—people have not passed through *captivity* in their personal lives. A deep work of grace and humility has not been wrought in their hearts. King Solomon never experienced captivity. He rose to prominence quickly and paid no price for the truths he preached. Did Solomon ever have painful delays? Did he ever deprive himself of anything? No! (cf. Ecc. 2:10). Later in life he had a tremendous collapse. King Saul never went into captivity either, and his end was dismal. The men in Scripture who really succeeded were those who submitted themselves to captivity. Moses was trained in the wilderness for many years, as were David, John the Baptist, Joseph, and the Apostle Paul.

Captivity is a time of deep trouble. Everything seems to go wrong, and then the trial drags on for a long, long time. During this time, we are deprived of many things that are dear to our hearts, but something is happening. *Iron* is entering our soul (cf. Psa.105:18). It is in “captivity” that the greatest men and women are formed. This is where *a heart to know God* is developed.



## Joseph in Captivity

Perhaps the life of Joseph best illustrates the truth of captivity. At the age of 17, God gave him a vision. In a dream, God revealed to Joseph His plan for his life. Shortly after the dream he found himself in a pit. Then he was sold as a slave and brought into Egypt. Joseph was an exile in a foreign land. While in Egypt, again he was betrayed and was thrust into a dungeon for about seven years.

Psalm 105:18-19 - “Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried [or tested] him.”

In the original Hebrew, the syntax is opposite. Instead of saying that Joseph was put in iron, the literal rendering would say that iron was put in Joseph. While he was confined to a dungeon, the years passed slowly. Joseph was deprived of the things he had cherished. They were put on “hold” year after year, but something was happening in his heart—*iron* was entering his soul. The long delays and the painful denials were developing great strength and discipline in his soul. Finally, at the age of 30, he was released from his captivity. God had performed a tremendous work in his heart during those years of captivity. Then God was able to use Joseph in extraordinary ways, and he was not ruined by success.

### The Training Period—A Time of Captivity

If we would humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and allow Him to do His work in our lives, then He would exalt us in due time (1 Pet. 5:6). God could use us in extraordinary ways. The problem with so many is that they *give up* when difficulties go on for any length of time (Heb.10:36).

In Hebrews 12:5-8, Paul exhorts the believers to “endure” the training period. Many are called, but few are chosen. Many Christians receive specific calls from God, but then they must be trained and tested in order to qualify for that call. Therefore, we have the training period of Hebrews 12:5-8, and often it is very difficult. It is a time of *captivity*. We are in God's corral.

“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto [sons], My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the lord loveth he chasteneth, and *scourgeth* every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with [full-grown] sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye [illegitimate], and not sons” (Heb.12:5-8).

Observe the Following:

- The common reaction to the training period is to *despise* it. We are exhorted not to do this.
- Many *faint* when they are corrected and chastened by God. They give up. We must not do this!
- It is God's love that brings correction. He *scourgeth* every son He receives. He does not want to reproduce our faults in others. Therefore, He is removing these faults before He multiplies us.
- If you *endure chastening* ... if you get through the training period ... you will receive the privileges of a full grown son. This is the thought of a son who has been entrusted with his father's estate.
- If we reject the Father's training and refuse his corrections and confinements, we are *illegitimate*. We will not bear His likeness. We will not resemble Him or represent Him.

There are many in the ministry today who are “illegitimate.” They have their own name, their own cause, their own vision, and they are building their own kingdom to glorify themselves. These have refused the training period and taken a shortcut to their inheritance. Their end is usually not good.

## **The Double Portion**

(42:12). “So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning...” (cf. 42:10). This is the thing we have to remember about every trial—*the end result*. God rewarded Job with a double portion of everything he had lost (cf. Jas. 5:11). The double portion is the blessing of every firstborn son (Deut. 21:15-17). In the Church there are some who are “firstborn” among their brethren. We will discuss this in greater detail at the end of the book.

### **Greater Emptying Before a New Infilling**

In order to contain more of the Spirit, God must first *empty* us of a lot of rubbish (2 Tim. 2:20-22). Also, He desires to *enlarge* our capacity. Our vessels must be cleansed of anything that accuses, opposes, or resists our Maker. Without knowing it, we have places in our hearts that still oppose and resist God (Mal. 3:13). Also, we must never harbor resentment toward God *for taking more time* than we thought He should.

### **Double Anointing / Double Responsibility**

Having a double portion of God's Spirit is not a light thing. It means *double responsibility!* It takes time, growth, and maturity to be able to receive this anointing. God does not give an extra portion of His Spirit without a purpose! When God gives the double portion, it is to accomplish a difficult task. This involves greater responsibility, greater demands on our time and life-style, and much, much more. The double portion also requires a greater portion of humility, for with added power there is added temptation to become proud and arrogant. It is unsavory when a preacher boasts that his church is the fastest growing church in the country, brags of the success of his ministry, and then denounces all the other ministers. This is precisely what happens when a man's success grows and grows, but the correction and deeper cleansing of his own heart have been refused.

### **Beauty For Ashes**

(42:13-15). “He had also seven sons and three daughters ... And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.” Here is another beautiful truth in the life of Job. Job received beauty for ashes (See Isaiah 61:3).

Job had been brought down to ashes, but out of ashes came forth exceptional beauty. His daughters were the most beautiful in all the land. Job's seed had extraordinary beauty because of the special grace he received in his trial. It is a well known fact that we produce like-kind. Every victory we gain in our own personal lives is a victory for our children as well, whether natural or spiritual children. It is easier to pass through the fire when we understand that the hardship is not only for our own perfecting, but for the sake of a people God will entrust to our care in the future.

Ashes speak of death, but more particularly of *death to self* in the Book of Job. When we have been brought to ashes, the beauty of Christ will be given to us. Job had become the finest gold during his time in the furnace (Isa. 13:12). Many people are afraid to surrender their lives fully to Christ because they do not really believe in the “resurrection.” They do not really believe that God could revive them after their ambitions, plans, and wishes have been brought to ashes. Let us put our lives into the hands of a faithful Creator. Remember what He did for Job—Job received beauty for ashes.

## **The End is What Counts**

(42:16-17). “After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full [or satisfied with] days.” Job's end was wonderful (Jas. 5:11), and after all, it is *the end* that counts. How we started out is not important, and where we came from is not important! Where we finally end up is the *real* issue. It is the final score in the game of life that counts.

During his trial, Job thought he would never be happy again and that he would go to an early grave. Instead, God had a double portion waiting for him, and another 140 fruitful years of life. Job emerged from his trial and had ten more children, and he lived long enough to see his great grandchildren. God had caused everything to work in his favor. God turned every curse into a blessing for Job.

Romans 8:28 must be a *revelation* to us, not just a nice passage of Scripture we commit to memory. Look at the first three words of verse 28: “And we know.” Do you see this? — It has to be a revelation to our hearts. “*And we know* that all things [are working together] for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” See Isaiah 54:17. Sooner or later the Lord will vindicate every righteous servant of God.

## **The Sovereign God Controls All Things**

(42:11). “Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over *all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him*: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.”

God made the day and night. God controls the seasons and He can change the seasons of our lives any time He pleases. He can elevate us or choose to diminish us. (See 1 Sam. 2:1-8, Psa. 75:6-7). Whatever God does, He does well, and no man can say to Him, “What doest thou?” (Dan. 4:35).

In the case of Job, God changed his day into night, and his season of prosperity into a time of want. But this was *only for a season*. The trial was necessary to accomplish something eternal in Job. Then God turned his captivity. God completely turned everything around for Job at the end. He even turned the hearts of all his former acquaintances back to him, and they “comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him.” Was God responsible for his trial? Yes! God was the Author, but better yet, He was also the Finisher of it (cf. Heb.12:2).

## **No Deliverance Until We Change Our Speech**

While we are still in chapter 42, I would like to make one further closing comment, and that is the fact that God would not bring Job's trial to an end until Job changed his conversation. Job was sinning with his lips, and until he recognized it, confessed it, and repented of it, there was no turning of his captivity (40:4, 42:1-6). In Psalm 50:23, it says: “To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation [or deliverance] of God.” It could be that God is not intervening in your situation or answering your prayers because of the conversations that go on in your home. God promises—“He that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the deliverance of God.” Is it well with your tongue? The use of our tongue will determine whether or not we find favor with God (cf. Psa. 45:2).

## WHERE DID RIGHTEOUS JOB ERR?

### A Review of the Theme

God's testimony of Job was outstanding—"There is none like him in the earth!"(1:8). Even when tragedy came, Job "did not sin with his lips or charge God foolishly." However, as the trial lengthened into long months, he asserted that God was unfair and irresponsible. The following verses reveal what God was getting at in Job's heart, and what He will deal with in our lives as well!

VERSE	JOB'S WRONG WORDS	JOB'S HEART ATTITUDES
9:17	<i>"He multiplieth my wounds without cause."</i>	"Lord, You have no right to allow this! I have done nothing to deserve this."
9:22-23	<i>"He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked" "He will laugh at the trial of the innocent."</i>	"It doesn't pay to be righteous. God treats the righteous and wicked the same. And He enjoys seeing the innocent suffer."
15:13	<i>"That thou turnest thy spirit against God and letteth such words go out of thy mouth."</i>	Job rose up <i>against</i> the Lord with challenges. He blurted out everything he was feeling.
16:9	<i>"He teareth me in His wrath, Who hateth me; mine Enemy fastens on me His piercing eyes."</i>	"God hates me! God is hateful and wrathful and He is taking it out on me."
27:1-4	<i>"As God liveth who hath taken away my justice."</i>	"God has not dealt fairly with me. He is a perverter of justice."
32:2	<i>"Because he justified himself rather than God." (27:1-4).</i>	He finds fault with God but none with himself.
33:10	<i>"Behold he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy."</i>	"God is against me, seeking grounds for alienation. He counts me as an enemy."
33:12-13	Elihu warns Job: <i>"God is greater than man. Why do you strive against Him?"</i>	Job was challenging, criticizing, correcting, and contending with God.
34:5	<i>"I am righteous, and God hath taken away my justice."</i>	Job is lifting up himself and by doing so, he is putting God down.
34:12 34:17-18	<i>"God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert justice." "Wilt thou condemn Him who is most just?"</i>	"God is irresponsible. I will say that right to the face of God."
35:2	<i>[Job, in effect]"Thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's."</i>	Here again, Job finds no fault with himself, but he does find fault with God.
36:23	<i>"Who can say [to God], Thou hast wrought iniquity?"</i>	Job had been accusing God of committing wickedness.
38:2	<i>[God speaks] "Who is he that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge."</i>	Job was dogmatic and authoritative on issues he knew little or nothing about.
40:2	<i>[God continues],"Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? He that [correcteth] God let him answer it!"</i>	Job was correcting God, and teaching Him. "I know more than you, Lord. This is the way you should do it."
40:8	<i>"Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous?"</i>	"Job, will you set God straight? Do you know more than the Lord. Will you be His counsellor?" (Rom.11:34,35).

## **JOB'S PROBLEM IS OUR PROBLEM!**

Job's problem is *man's* problem—it is *my* problem! The truths concerning Job's struggle are found throughout God's Word. Below are several other Scriptures to further develop the subject:

(Isaiah 45:9). “*Woe to him that striveth with his Maker. Shall the clay [us] say to Him that fashioneth it: What makest thou? Or the work, He hath no hands?*” This is God's rebuke to man for criticizing Him for the way He formed us. Most people do not like their looks. They would rather look like someone else. However, “to criticize the design is to criticize the Designer.” God made us as we are for an important reason. Thus, we should thank Him for it. God uses our physical imperfections to develop inward spiritual qualities and character.

(Ezekiel 18:25) “*Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O Israel: Is not my way equal, are not your ways unequal?*” (cf. Ezek. 33:17, 20). Here again is man striving with God. When people disagree with the Scriptures they are disagreeing with God and saying: “God, I am right, You are wrong!” However, God never aligns Himself with our thinking. We must line up to His (Isa. 55:8).

(Romans 11:34). “*Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or hath been his counsellor?*” God needs no correction. Man should never try to instruct the Lord! God is not the one who is mixed up! Man is! “Let God be true and every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4).

(Daniel 4:1-37). This chapter records one of the greatest conversions of all time. Nebuchadnezzar had exalted himself before the very face of God. He commanded all worship to be directed to himself. God humiliated him for this, turning him into an animal for seven years. Afterwards, the king repented, came to his senses, and published an earth-shaking testimony throughout the empire. During his humiliation he learned that “*None can stay his hand or say to Him, What doest thou?*” (4:35). The king learned his lesson well—no one can rise up, defy, challenge, or question the Lord.

### **Review of the Theme**

THE THEME: (4:17) “*Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?*” This revelation came to Eliphaz in a dream, and remarkably the dream was given by *a spirit*. Nevertheless, the night vision was true, and it is the theme of Job. The purpose of the book is to teach man that God is infinitely just, *no matter what tragedy* in life may come, and He cannot at any time be charged with error. Charging God with error or irresponsibility is sin. It is equivalent to disdain the wisdom and love of God! Jehovah reserves the right to do whatever He desires in our lives (Psa.135:6). Yet, every action He takes toward man is saturated in wisdom, mercy, and love.

The Book of Job is the oldest book on earth. God has sought to convey Job's message to Adam's race for thousands of years. To charge God with irresponsibility and “not caring” is one of the greatest flaws in man. Therefore, it is not insignificant that Job is the oldest book on earth—Job's message has been necessary since the beginning of time.

### **What We Say TO God and ABOUT God is All-Important**

The generation that came out of Egypt never entered the land of promise. Israel closed God's heart by their evil attitudes and harsh words against Him (Num.14:3; Deut.1:27). Caleb and Joshua were the only ones who knew how to win God's favor, saying: “If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it to us” (Num.14:8). *A right confession* is the key to winning God's favor.







# ***PURPOSES AND BENEFITS OF ADVERSITY***

## **Looking At Trouble From Heaven's Perspective**

### SUFFERING ACCOMPLISHES THE FOLLOWING:

- Destroys pride, opens the door for new grace
- Shows us what is in our hearts
- Makes us mellow and compassionate
- Helps us cease from sinning
- Makes us stable and uncompromising
- Brings peace
- Keeps us on course
- Produces patience
- Purifies our faith
- Works out obedience
- Makes us meek
- Brings us to true joy
- Identifies us with Christ's reproach
- Gives us the ability to comfort others
- Creates divine nature [gold tried in fire]
- Prepares us to reign with Christ
- Brings us to full Sonship
- Causes us to enter the kingdom
- Makes us perfect
- Brings us to a greater knowledge of and relationship with Christ
- Brings us to glory
- Makes truth come alive
- Allows vicarious suffering [suffering for others]

The Lord has ordained all of our obstacles, enemies, and problems *to work for us*. All injustices, irritations and sorrows are working vigorously on our behalf to produce within us all of the virtues we have just listed. Trouble is meant to be our servant! Just think of all the eternal qualities that would go unproduced if we had no troubles.

1.) DESTROYS PRIDE—Pride is possibly the greatest problem you or I face. According to Job 33:16-20, God chastens His people with strong pain in order “*to hide pride from man.*” Pride hinders us from receiving grace for grace is only given to the *lowly* (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:6). Therefore, it is divine love that leads us through difficulties to work out humility. Humility opens the door and conditions us to receive new grace and many other blessings (Prov. 20:30).

2.) SHOWS US WHAT IS IN OUR HEARTS—“Every man is right in his own eyes” (Prov. 21:2). (cf. Deut. 8:2; Jer. 17:9). Trials and difficulties provoke hidden, evil motives and elements to rise to the surface in order that we may be convinced and *see* our problem as it really is. When God chooses to expose, it may seem humiliating and embarrassing, but it will be unto *life*, not unto death.

3.) MAKES US MELLOW AND COMPASSIONATE—Harshness, rashness and a critical spirit are devoured in the fire of affliction. Personal failure and humiliation make us more gracious and merciful to others. There are times when it is healthy for us to suffer defeat and failure. Job said, “*God maketh my heart soft*” (23:16). Long periods of stress and difficulty also *condition us to receive* what we were not willing or able to receive before. When we *see* what God sees in us, we will be changed. Paul said we are transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2).

4.) HELPS US CEASE FROM SINNING—Suffering destroys our bent (or propensity) to sin. “He that hath suffered in the flesh [willingly ceases] from sin” (1 Pet. 4:1). It does not matter how sincere we are, there are powerful “bents” in our nature that must be subdued such as—pride, arrogance, stubbornness and anger. Suffering is often the means by which these *bents* are brought under control.

5.) MAKES US STABLE—“After you have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet. 5:10). Suffering brings us to maturity! It makes us stable and takes out the *compromise*. When we have paid a very high price for the truth, we will cherish it with all our heart (Prov. 23:23). We do not value those things for which we have paid no price.

6.) BRINGS PEACE—God desires to deal with everything in our lives that is robbing us of peace. Resentment, pride, and other self-induced sorrows take away our peace. God *judges* these inner conflicts when we are passing through the fires of affliction. When the three Hebrews were in the fiery furnace, the Son of God was with them in the fire. The only thing that was burned was their bondages. All the fire did was devour their bondages (Dan. 3:21,25). The purpose of fiery trials is to burn off our bondages, without injuring us at all. After we have been chastened by God and these turmoils have been purged, there will be a high yield of “*the peaceable fruit of righteousness*” as mentioned by Paul in Hebrews 12:11. See also Psalm 94:12-13.

7.) KEEPS US FROM GOING ASTRAY—“*Before I was afflicted I went astray*” (Psa.119:67). Often God's chastenings restrain us from going off course. Perhaps it was His rod that brought us *back* to the path. But another point is this—if you have an overwhelming problem or mountain in your life, the fastest way through it is by a *tunnel*. A tunnel is dark and lonely, even frightening, but it is the quickest way. *It keeps you on course too!* God may take you through a tunnel experience. It is dark, but you are moving in the right direction and you are kept from veering off. God may keep you *confined* for a while, but He is prohibiting you from turning to the right hand or the left. God has chosen the very best route for our lives. Therefore, let us thank Him for His faithfulness.

8.) PRODUCES PATIENCE—“Tribulation worketh patience” (Rom. 5:3). The word tribulation literally means *pressure*. Periods of tremendous pressure in our lives produce great patience. Job had experienced the “Great Tribulation.” He is known for the *patience* he received in tribulation (Jas. 5:11). In the last days the Great Tribulation will produce a depth of patience in the saints (Rev.13:10; 14:12; 7:13-14). Tribulation will perfect God's Church and prepare her to reign with Christ (Rev.19:7-8). Job typifies the suffering, glorified Church. He is *the Millennium Saint*.

9.) PURIFIES OUR FAITH—Our faith must be purified. 1 Peter 1:7 and James 1:2-3 clearly state this. “*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*” Our faith is mixed with presumption and emotions, even as impulsive Peter learned earlier in life. Therefore, Peter had to pass through many purifying trials in his lifetime. At the end of his life, his faith was “found unto praise, honour and glory.” Job said, “He knoweth the way that I take, and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).

Everything we do must be born of faith—not out of impatience, hysteria, frustration, emotion, or our own ideas. All our words and actions must be born from true faith. Thus, our faith must be purified. Whatsoever is not born of faith is often sin (cf. Rom.14:23).

10.) WE LEARN OBEDIENCE BY THE THINGS WE SUFFER—As a man, our Lord Jesus had to learn obedience (or control) by the things He suffered (Heb. 2:10; 5:8-9). We will be trained, equipped, disciplined, and prepared by that often shunned treasure called *adversity*. Wisdom, also, is learned through painful mistakes and failures. Sometimes we learn and absorb more from what we do wrong than from what we do right.

11.) MEEKNESS BY SUFFERING—Moses was the meekest man on earth. He spent forty years in the wilderness being crushed and losing his identity. Meekness is the exact opposite of anger. A meek person bears chastisement and accepts his circumstances. An angry person will not. It requires many crushings for us to become meek. Meekness involves the surrender of our rights to God. When Christians have *not* surrendered their rights to God, they have “anger” problems all the time.

12.) JOY IS THE RESULT OF SUFFERING—“*Well done good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of the Lord*” (Mt. 25:21, 23). Doing the will of God (which usually is not the popular or easy way) ultimately results in great joy. Suffering actually carves out a greater capacity for joy in our being. The apostles experienced great joy as they were humiliated for their testimony. “Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41). We will have joy to the same degree that we suffer for Christ. People who have paid no price and have not suffered for Christ have very little joy. See also Luke 6:21-26.

13.) SUFFERING IDENTIFIES US WITH CHRIST—Suffering sets us apart as being His! “Let us go forth therefore *unto Him* outside the camp, bearing his reproach” (Heb.13:12-13). Jesus is not popular in the world system, and even in some churches. He is *outside* the camp. This is where we will find Him. Moses esteemed *the reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures of Egypt (Heb.11:26). If we are unwilling to be identified with Christ's reproach, we cannot partake of His glory. See again Acts 5:41; Luke 6:21-26; Romans 8:18; 1 Peter 4:12-13; Mark 8:38.

14.) GIVES THE ABILITY TO COMFORT OTHERS—In the areas where God has consoled us, we will be able to comfort and understand others (2 Cor.1:3-7). *Empathy* is needed, not *sympathy*. Empathy is intuition to know what another is *feeling* and *thinking* because we have passed through similar situations. Job's friends did not have empathy. Their experience was not deep enough to understand and *feel* for Job. They had not suffered enough!

15.) CREATES DIVINE NATURE—“*Gold tried in the fire*” (Rev. 3:18). Gold represents *divine nature*. Refined gold comes from the fiery furnace. Fire and intense heat separate impurities and mixture from gold. Without this intense heat the *mixture* remains! Thus, divine nature is costly! Paul said, “Our affliction worketh for us” (2 Cor. 4:17). Affliction is actually *creating* for us an eternal weight of glory.

16.) PREPARES A PERSON TO REIGN WITH CHRIST—“*If we suffer with him, we will also reign with him*” (2 Tim. 2:12). Suffering prepares the saint of God for *a better resurrection*. It is suiting him for his eternal position in the kingdom of heaven. Those who receive “abundance of grace” will reign with Christ (Rom. 5:17). This grace is offered when we are in need (Heb. 4:16). Thus, it is during times of stress when life-changing grace is poured into us. Grace is a substance. It is something we *receive* when we are under pressure. God always gives us sufficient grace to equal our need. If our need is great, this is an opportunity to receive *a huge amount* of grace.

17.) BRINGS US UNTO FULL SONSHIP—(Read Hebrews 12:5-7). It is a serious mistake to *despise* the corrections and disciplines of the Lord and *give up!* If we *endure* chastening, God will deal with us as full-grown sons and daughters (Heb.12:8). However, if correction is refused repeatedly, old problems and bondages such as wrath, pride, stubbornness will remain firmly intact. God will finally have to say, “You are not My son or daughter. You do not resemble or represent Me at all. You are nothing like Me.” This is God's definition of *illegitimate*—one who refuses correction or change so that he bears no resemblance or likeness of the Heavenly Father (Heb.12:8).

18.) WE ENTER THE KINGDOM THROUGH SUFFERING—“*Through much tribulation we enter the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22). The kingdom of God is three things: 1.) Heaven itself; 2.) Heaven brought down to earth—the millennium; and 3.) Heaven brought into the hearts of men—an inner reality. Paul says “The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom.14:17). Therefore, the kingdom of God is also *a realm*, a way of life, and a higher dimension of living (Lk.17:20-21). The *poor in spirit* have this kingdom life (Mt. 5:3). But this kingdom reality is entered by suffering. We enter the kingdom (righteousness, peace, and joy) by much tribulation.

19.) WE ARE MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING—The word *perfect* means “complete, entire, mature, fully equipped, and fit for the task.” Jesus was made perfect through much suffering (Heb. 2:10; 5:8-9). Suffering prepares us for *the task* God has ordained for us to do. Mistakes, failures, delays, disciplines, corrections and chastening all work together to prepare us for *the work* God has sent us to do.

20.) WE COME TO KNOW JESUS THROUGH SUFFERING—Paul wanted to know Christ in every facet. One way he wanted to know Him was through “*the fellowship of His sufferings*” as he says in Philippians 3:10. We cannot appreciate Christ unless we have walked with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is *not possible* to know God intimately if we want an easy life, because God Himself has known great suffering and sacrifice. A gospel of prosperity tends to produce spiritual *infants* rather than full-grown sons. The emphasis is placed upon having God do something for ME, rather than having my life changed in order to bring pleasure to Him and to do His will.

21.) SUFFERING BRINGS US TO GLORY—Our present distress is not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17). Glory is always preceded by suffering (1 Pet. 4:12-14; 5:1). Paul said that our affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory.

22.) SUFFERING MAKES TRUTH COME ALIVE—An understanding of the Scriptures can only come as we drink deeply of the cup of pain and we *experience* our message. The truth must become a reality within us, otherwise authority and insight will be lacking. *Light and Life*, as you remember, are God's rewards to those who have passed through miserable times (Job 3:20). The truths of Scripture do not really belong to us until we have paid for them. Truth is expensive (Prov. 23:23).

23.) VICARIOUS SUFFERINGS—(*Suffering for others*) This is another form of suffering. It is suffering to bring others into victory. Paul travailed in spirit to bring the Galatian believers into maturity (Gal. 4:19). The Lord may allow you to *feel* the burdens and bondages of others while you are praying for them. Paul said he was suffering for the Body of Christ to help bring her into maturity (Col. 1:24, 2:1). Suffering can also release *life* for others (2 Cor. 4:10-12).

## Weakness of The Prosperity Message

The “prosperity message”—although it has been a blessing in many ways—has hindered Christian growth in the Body of Christ for several reasons. The prosperity message has emphasized what God can do for *me*, the easiest way out of my problems, a quick answer, how I can be a success, and how I can be someone. But it has not emphasized a changed life! It has not emphasized a denial of self in order to do the will of God. The Church has been fed milk in America and elsewhere, and this is the reason she is immature. The message of the cross is offensive to many, but observe the *eternal qualities* that go unproduced without it! Do not miss the main point in life, which is this—“What are we taking into eternity with us?” (What has been done in my heart?)

### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “SUFFERING”?

Should we accept every difficulty as coming from the hand of God? No! In another sense we should not! This is not the intention of studying the Book of Job. Satan sends situations into our lives and our enemy should be *resisted* with all of our strength! (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Jud 3:1-2). This course is not seeking to promote *passivity* toward Satan and the kingdom of darkness. We are in a real battle against real enemies. When we are sick, we should pray for healing. When we are in need, we should seek God for His provision. And we should war a spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness that hold people in the clutches of iniquity (Eph. 6:10-18).

On the other hand, God still has Satan around for a very important reason. God uses the enemy to test us, and He uses adversity to develop us and *to get our attention*. When a problem or attack of Satan comes into our lives, we should ask God if there is something in particular He is trying to say to us which we have *not* been able to hear.

God allowed Satan to buffet Job *for a season*, but afterwards God gave Job the upper hand over Satan. When a man's ways please God, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him (Prov.16:7). God will give us the ascendancy over Satan when issues are adjusted and put right in our lives. But God often uses adversity and Satan to get our *undivided attention*! God will avenge us of our enemy when *our* obedience is fulfilled (2 Cor.10:6; 1 Cor. 6:2-3).



## FACING THE PROBLEM OF — “IT'S NOT FAIR”

When “*It's not fair*” is continually in our dialogue, it indicates two things—that we still have *not* learned the ways of the Lord and we still are *not* in victory. How often do you say—It's not fair?

“*It's Not Fair!*” —

- I deserve something better in life!
- I hate my job . . . others have better jobs. They work less but they are paid more. It's not fair!
- Why do I always have to make every nickel count while others have abundance? It's not fair!
- I don't have nice clothes like my sisters! It's not fair!
- I was deprived of a happy childhood.  
Why did God let it happen? It's not fair! *God* isn't fair!
- I'm too tall, too short, too fat, too thin. I have terrible skin, hair, eyes, etc. My nose is too big.  
Why couldn't I look like someone else? It's not fair!
- I was right and the other person was wrong. He was praised and I was put down.  
There is no justice. It's not fair!
- I felt the Lord showed me something. I was sincere and then it all turned out to be wrong.  
God let me make a mistake. It's not fair! *God* isn't fair. If that's the way it is . . . I quit!
- Why does God allow this situation to continue when I know He can change it? He's not fair!
- God didn't give me a happy marriage. He let me down. God has failed me. God is not fair!
- Why does God have favorites? It's not fair.
- God hasn't provided enough! It's not fair.
- God doesn't care enough! It's not fair.
- I've got a raw deal in life. It's not fair; *God* isn't fair!
- I deserve something better, I deserve: —

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| ◆ better health     | ◆ more happiness   |
| ◆ better job        | ◆ more justice     |
| ◆ better house      | ◆ more approval    |
| ◆ better spouse     | ◆ more recognition |
| ◆ better conditions | ◆ more money       |

**The Truth is—We Do Not Even Deserve What We Have!**

WE SHOULD REALIZE:

“*It's not fair*” is actually an attack against the Lord, the Provider and Shepherd of our soul. It is saying in effect, “God has not been fair. He has not taken care of me. He is insensitive to my needs. God is hard and uncaring. God is partial, He has favorites. He is good to some and unloving to others. God is irresponsible.”

**These complaints reveal unresolved problems in our hearts and show that we are not viewing life from Scriptural perspectives. When a Christian constantly laments of injustices, it shows he is not in victory! These complaints are the very reason we have not found favor with God (Num.11:1). God wants to perfect in us *an excellent spirit of thankfulness*.**



## COMPLAINING REVEALS THE FOLLOWING

1.) THE LACK OF GRATITUDE. Rather than thanking God for a multitude of good things, the complainer focuses only on those things he still wants. A woman said to me one time: “God has failed me. He has not given me a happy marriage.” That's quite a thing to say about God! As I reflect upon her statement: she had six beautiful children and plenty of good food to eat; all of them had healthy bodies, the hope of everlasting life ... and ten thousand other blessings.

Scripture says: “*He daily loads us with benefits*” (Psa. 68:19). “*His mercies are new every morning*” (Lam. 3:22-23). In addition to all His blessings, God has not given us the punishment we deserve (Psa.103:10). Complaining is an attitude that says God owes me something; He has not treated me fairly. Man forgets how much he owes God. Complaining shows the depth of man's unthankfulness.

2.) CONTENTMENT IS ABSENT. Joy is the result of being fully satisfied with God's presence, rather than having numerous material blessings. David had found “fullness of joy” in God's presence (Psa.16:11). Can we be happy just with Jesus, or is our heart greatly attached to earthly things—a nice house, fancy clothes, or being successful? Is your heart overly attached to human love? One of the greatest reasons for *unhappiness* concerns the issue of human love. So often human love is idolatrous. When human love is worshipped, it never brings any joy because an “idol” has no life. Paul learned to be content with whatever the hand of God brought into his life (Phil. 4:11). David said, “At thy right hand there are pleasures forever more” (Psa.16:11). If we will allow God to *reduce us* to Psalm 27:4, we will find the same contentment and fulfillment that David and Paul discovered.

3.) WE ARE COMPARING OURSELVES WITH OTHERS. *Comparing* is what God tells us *not* to do (2 Cor.10:12). Every time we do what God tells *not* to do, we have trouble. If we will stop comparing ourselves with others, we will save ourselves a lot of grief. “Comparing” is a *major* fault in man. We look at others and assume that we should have what they have. When we cannot have what others have, we call it “unfair,” and then we are angry. Perhaps if we had the same things it would not be good for us! Maybe it could even destroy us. The only One we should compare ourselves with is the Chief Corner Stone, the Lord Jesus Christ.

4.) COMPLAINING IS A CRITICISM OF GOD AND HIS WISDOM. The redeemed as well as the unredeemed criticize God. Man complains constantly of the way God has fashioned him, led him, provided for him, and permitted circumstances to come into his life. The Israelites were ever guilty of this. *Because of it they found no favor with God* (Heb. 3:7-11). They never partook of what God had planned for their lives! When we hurry God, we are criticizing Him (“Lord, You sure take Your time!”). It is foolish to criticize God for the way He fashioned us (Isa. 45:9). God made us exactly as we are for a purpose (See Psalm 139). God uses physical flaws to develop special grace and a special message in our lives. God can remove a problem when it ceases to serve a divine purpose.

5.) WE ARE NOT VIEWING LIFE FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE. We complain when we do not understand His ways. Continually complaining about *injustices* is evidence that we do not understand God's ways. When we *do* understand, we will appreciate the truth that adversity is working *for our benefit*. Trouble is our servant (2 Cor. 4:17; Gen. 45:4-8; 50:20). Joseph could look back upon all the injustices of his life and say ... “*God meant it for good.*” Injustices ushered Joseph to the throne.

6.) COMPLAINING SHOWS *BEING CONFORMED TO CHRIST'S IMAGE* IS SECONDARY. The man whose goal is to be conformed to the image of Christ has a God-given wisdom. He discerns *the hidden hand of God* in the difficulties and irritations of life. He understands that God has a purpose for everything. Therefore, rather than complaining about trouble, he gives thanks (1 Thes. 5:18). On the other hand, the people who are uncommitted and looking for an easy life constantly complain about their circumstances. They cannot see any benefit at all that would result from adversity.

7.) COMPLAINING MEANS THAT OUR WELLS ARE BLOCKED. Complaining is an attack against God. Complaining diminishes all our faith and all our joy. Complaining means we are not giving thanks and there is no song in our hearts to the Lord. Unbelief and complaining go hand in hand. Complaining is something God *hates* (See Numbers 11:1 again).

Complaining Reveals the Following: (Review)

- That *gratitude* is missing. (It is impossible to be thankful while complaining.)  
That the focus is upon what one *wants*, rather than the multitude of blessings he already *has*.
- That *contentment* in circumstances has not been learned.
- That we are *comparing* ourselves with others and angry because we don't have what they have.
- That we are *criticizing* God and His wisdom, believing we could do things better.
- That we are *not viewing life* from God's perspective.
- That being conformed to Christ's image is *not* our ultimate goal. No benefit is seen in adversity.
- That our wells are blocked—faith and joy are gone and unbelief is reigning.

### **We Must Understand This Truth About Adversity**

\* If God has allowed a lingering problem in our lives, it means we need it! He is trying to show us something or accomplish something. When the issue God is addressing is corrected or adjusted, He will then remove the “thorn” (2 Cor.10:6). Remember, God left a problem in David's life—Saul. Saul chased David for years and God did not allow David to have dominion over him. After the special redeeming work of grace was completed in David's heart (humility, dependence on God, patience), then God removed the problem. He removed Saul, the tormentor (Prov.16:7).

### **This Truth is Seen in the Life of Joseph**

Joseph, the son of Jacob, grew up in an unhappy home of strife and envy. His brothers conspired to kill him. Joseph was completely righteous, but he entered a period in his life when everything went wrong for him. Was it fair? *Yes!* Look at the finished product! He was sent into a foreign land and was sold into slavery. In Egypt, he was betrayed and placed in a dungeon for years. And yet, in all of this, God was preparing him to be a deliverer for his generation.

Every injustice moved him a little closer to the throne. Dark times, confusion, painful delays, and cruel accusations were putting iron into his soul. Since Joseph was going to become a savior to his generation, God had to temper him as steel so that he would not break under the pressure. It was Joseph who had the answers for his generation—answers he obtained in unusual and difficult circumstances. Surely, every injustice is a blessing in disguise. They are fair in God's economy! God meant it all for good. God uses *everything* for our ultimate good! (Gen. 45:5-8; 50:20; Rom. 8:28).

# A Few Helps for Overcoming the “It’s Not Fair” Syndrome

## Conquering Bitterness

■ **BE THANKFUL**—Rather than dwelling on what we do *not* have, we should stop and count our blessings. We must be grateful for all God has done for us and for everything He has brought into our lives (1 Thes. 5:18). Even the *dark times* are God's gift and “treasure” unto us (cf. Isa. 45:3). Some of life's greatest treasures are found only in the dark. Thankfulness turns every defeat into a victory. Gratitude also brings faith and joy into our hearts ... and God's favor! Therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

■ **DO NOT COMPARE YOURSELF WITH OTHERS**—(2 Cor.10:12). Bitterness comes when we measure ourselves with others, and then expect *equality*. Scripture commands us *not* to compare ourselves with one another. Never mind what others have. We should learn to be satisfied with those things the wisdom of God has allotted to us.

■ **FULLY FORGIVE ALL YOUR OFFENDERS**—It is easier to forgive others when we truly realize how deeply we have hurt others. People who cannot forgive are oblivious to the injury they have caused others. They are sensitive only to their own hurts. Let us release offenders from all hurts and losses they have caused us. Pardon them of all broken promises and disappointments, on the basis of Ephesians 4:32: “Even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.”

Psalm 103:10—God has not given us the judgment we deserve. Therefore, we should be *lenient* with others. Remember, when you harden yourself toward someone, you will not be able to open your heart to the Lord. The heart becomes insensitive and crusted over. Stay tender! Bitterness is the result of refusing available sustaining grace when we are hurt (Heb.12:15).

■ **DO NOT AVENGE YOURSELF**—Striking back and trying to “get even” only makes us harder (Prov. 24:29). Entrust the offense to God (1 Pet. 2:23). “Venting it out of our system” does not work in the long run. Each time we exercise the old nature, it only makes it stronger!

■ **PRACTICE THINKING MERCIFUL THOUGHTS TOWARD OFFENDERS**—What we choose to meditate upon is very important! Words and actions begin in our thoughts. *Practice thinking* something good about your offenders. (This requires effort, and grace!) Then when we speak to them it will come out more gracefully. Also, do little gestures of kindness to those who have hurt you. Speak constructively of them to others. Above all, pray for them.

■ **RECOGNIZE THAT GOD HAS A HIDDEN BLESSING IN EVERY INJUSTICE**—If we keep our hearts right, cruel and miserable experiences will bring *numerous blessings*. “Injustices” are ordained of God to bless our latter end (cf. Gen. 50:20.)

■ **REMEMBER THAT GOD WILL VINDICATE YOU, SOONER OR LATER**—Do not always expect justice in this life. Jesus had no justice here on earth. However, He will be vindicated when He comes again, and He will be vindicated for *all eternity*. In some cases we may not have vindication until the Day of Judgment (1 Pet. 2:23; 4:19; Ecc.12:14). But be assured of this: sooner or later God will surely bring *everything* into light, and justice will be meted out.

■ JESUS SUFFERED INJUSTICES TOO; WE ARE NOT BETTER THAN HE—(cf. Jn.15:20; 1 Pet. 2:21.) We are called upon to suffer for the sake of righteousness, and to be a “partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Tim.1:8). Should our Master bear injustices and His bride have none? Quite the contrary! The apostles rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Ac. 5:41).

■ ACCEPT EVERYTHING GOD SENDS AS MORE THAN FAIR—This is true meekness! Whatever God sends our way is designed for our benefit and perfecting. God will remove the “thorn” when His special work is accomplished in our lives. God's wisdom and love are perfect toward us. He is worthy to be trusted, and when we show this trust, it satisfies His heart.

■ ADAPT THE MENTALITY THAT WE DO NOT DESERVE ANYTHING—We do not deserve *more* or *better* of anything—we deserve nothing. God does not owe us anything. He loves to bestow many generous kindnesses upon man, but man does not deserve them. Man in general is unthankful. Gratitude for what we already possess will lead to sincere praise and worship. It is impossible to praise or worship properly with ingratitude permeating our heart.

### God Loves Cheerful Givers

God loves cheerful givers, those who serve and sacrifice cheerfully in everything they do. Scripture exhorts, “*Delight thyself in the Lord.*” Those who delight themselves in the Lord will come into all the promises of God (Num.14:8-9). Our *attitude* is so important if we desire God's favor. The Heavenly Bridegroom desires to free His Bride of all negative tones (complaining, criticizing, ingratitude). There is nothing negative at all about Christianity. *Christianity is light. Christ Himself is Light.* Therefore, the true Christian message contains nothing that is gloomy! (1 Jn.1:5).

#### OVERCOMING “IT'S NOT FAIR”

- ◆ Be Grateful ... Keep a Song in Your Heart.
- ◆ Do Not Compare Yourself With Others.
- ◆ Fully Release All Your Offenders.
- ◆ Realize How Much You have Hurt Others.
- ◆ Do Not Avenge Yourself.
- ◆ Practice Thinking Merciful Thoughts Toward Offenders.
- ◆ Pray For Those Who Offend You.
- ◆ Recognize That God Has a Disguised Blessing in Every Injustice.
- ◆ Remember That God Will Vindicate You—Sooner or Later.
- ◆ Jesus Suffered Injustices Too—We Are Not Better Than He is.
- ◆ Accept Everything God Sends As *More Than Fair*.
- ◆ Adapt the Mentality that “We Deserve Nothing.”

## **SEEING JUDGMENT FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE**

What is your concept of judgment? What do you think of when someone mentions judgment or God's judgment? Usually we are affected in a *negative* way. The word itself seems to carry the sense of heavy penalty, punishment, and displeasure from the hand of God. However, though it could mean any of these, a better definition of the word could help clear up these negative misconceptions.

### **Everyone Shall Be Judged**

God has made it clear that all of mankind, good or evil, must be judged and none shall escape. “And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness” (Psa. 9:8). “For he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness; and the people with his truth” (Psa. 96:13). “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psa. 7:11). Still the question remains, what do we really mean by “judge”?

A.) DUWN (doon)—is a Hebrew word signifying “judgment.” It means *to rule; to judge as an umpire; to strive as at law, contend; execute; judge; minister judgment; plead the cause.*

B.) SHAPHAT—is another Hebrew word that is used to describe judgment. It means: *to judge; to pronounce sentence (for or against); to vindicate or punish; to govern; to litigate; avenge; condemn; contend; defend; execute judgment; be a judge; plead; reason; and rule.*

C.) KRINO—is a Greek word used in Scripture to describe the scope and action of judgment. It means: *To distinguish, to decide mentally or judicially. By implication: to try; condemn; punish; avenge; call in question; or sentence.*

### **God Would Judge Evil in Our Hearts Now So That We Are Spotless in the Day of Judgment**

With a fuller definition of the word *judgment*, we are able to see that God's judgment is not always a case wherein we will be found guilty to be punished. It may mean judgment unto cleansing and vindication. The purpose of trials is to see what is in our hearts and to rid us of everything that is unlike the One who is judging us. “His eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men” (Psa. 11:4).

To follow after righteousness, we *first* must follow after the One to whom righteousness belongs (Dan. 9:7). The Righteous Judge of the universe will examine us with His all-seeing eyes. He will send testings and trials in order that all hidden iniquity may be sifted out of us as it was from Job. During the sifting times, we often lose sight of the reason for the trial which is to present us blameless before the Spotless One (Jude 1:24; Rev. 14:5, Eph. 1:4). An understanding of this end-result makes us better able to *accept* and *welcome* His righteous judgments in our lives.

A close examination of Scripture reveals several major reasons for God's judgments upon the earth and in our own personal lives. These purposes challenge some of today's theology, but if we can embrace the truths of God's Word, we shall come to know the victory that God intended for our lives through *the purification of judgment.*



## **SEVERAL REASONS FOR JUDGMENT**

- **Judgment unto Deliverance**
- **Judgment unto Vindication**
- **Judgment unto Proving**
- **Judgment unto Holiness**
- **Judgment unto Rewards**
- **Judgment unto Love**
- **Judgment unto Glory**

JUDGMENT UNTO DELIVERANCE — God wants to deliver us from the many enemies that surround and vex us. Some of them are *outside* of us, and some are *inside*. As God judges us, He is separating the precious from the vile in our lives. “*Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and [scourges] every son whom he receiveth*” (Heb. 12:6-7). Daniel’s three friends were bound and cast into a fiery furnace. The fire burned off all their bondages, yet they themselves were not touched by the fire or smoke. The trials through which we pass are intended to burn off our bondages. In the furnace of affliction, God is judging and burning up what is undesirable and what is hindering our spiritual progress, while we ourselves are able to come out of the fire unharmed.

JUDGMENT UNTO VINDICATION—David prayed that God would vindicate him before his enemies and rule in his favor. “*Judge me O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation. Deliver me from deceitful and unjust men*” (Psa. 43:1). “But God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psa. 75:7). Judgment separates and distinguishes us from the ungodly that surround us. Jeremiah was separated from his ungodly brethren (Jer. 15:17). God has to correct His Church first before He can judge the world (cf. 2 Cor. 10:6; 1 Pet. 4:17; Prov. 16:7). God will rebuke our enemies *after* He has accomplished His work in us.

JUDGMENT TO PROVE US — God brings judgment to His people in order to prove them. “*The Lord thy God led thee through this great and terrible wilderness . . . to prove thee*” (Deut. 8:2). God tested Job and had confidence in Job’s character and in the outcome of the trial. Job was judged to be faithful! Abraham was judged to be faithful when he willingly released his dearest possession, Isaac.

JUDGMENT UNTO HOLINESS — God’s judgments in our lives force us to choose the road we want to travel. One road leads to holiness, the other to mixture and uncleanness. “*He that is unjust let him [continue to become] more unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him [continue to become] more filthy still; He that is righteous, let him [continue to become] more righteous still; and he that is holy, let him [continue to become] more holy still*” (Rev. 22:11). One road gets better and better, from righteousness to holiness. The other road gets worse and worse, from unrighteousness to filthiness.

By our response to God’s judgments in our lives, we are choosing a particular path (Deut. 30:19). We are choosing life or death by our *acceptance or rejection* of the issues He confronts us with. If we submit to God’s righteous judgments in our lives, we will be placed on the paths of righteousness. Let us be able to say with the Psalmist, “Judge me O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity; I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore I will not slide” (Psa. 26:1). “But he knoweth the way that I take; and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).



JUDGMENT UNTO REWARDS — Another purpose for God's judgments and humblings in our lives is that we might be brought unto a rich eternal inheritance. God longs to exalt the faithful ones who endure His righteous siftings and judgments (1 Pet. 5:6). “So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning” (Job 42:12). Joseph also was blessed with a double portion at the end of his trials (Gen. 48:22, Eze. 47:13). Judgment came to both Joseph and Job, but God vindicated them at the end by giving them a double inheritance.

Scripture is very clear about the reward of the righteous. “*Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world*” (1 Cor. 6:2). “*Know ye not that we shall judge angels, and how much more things that pertain to this life*” (1 Cor. 6:3). But God must first judge wickedness in our own hearts before He can assign us the task of judging the world and rebellious angels (1 Cor.11:31-32; 2 Cor.10:6).

JUDGMENT UNTO LOVE — Several years ago a devout Christian prayed: “*Lord, teach us how to relate to the whole body of Christ.*” It was a prayer birthed by the Holy Spirit. God is in the process of judging prejudices, preconceived ideas, and suspicions in our minds that divide and separate us from other born-again believers.

“*Judge not that ye be not judged!*” A redeemed mind promotes unity and love for the brethren, but the natural mind separates us from one other. It is imperative that we allow God to judge our natural mind—our preferences, prejudices, and traditions. The natural mind is an archenemy of unity and love for the brethren. May we permit God to burn up any remaining infirmities of our natural mind. He will accomplish this as He is *judging* us.

JUDGMENT UNTO GLORY — Another purpose for judgment is that we might see Him—the Lord of glory. After enduring the fires of God, Job was able to say, “*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee*” (Job 42:5). He was only able to declare this after several major flaws which had been obscuring his vision of the Lord were judged in his life. The end result of God judging us is that we might come to know Him. God must judge those areas of blindness which hinder us from seeing what He sees. Job was delivered only after *he saw what God saw in him*.

May God grant us the courage and grace to enter the arena of God's judgment whereby we will be tried but not destroyed, even as the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace. May we be able to say at the end of all our trials, as the Captain of our salvation said, “*The prince of this world cometh, [Satan] and hath nothing in me*” (Jn.14:30).

**“Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.” Psalm 66:11-12**

## PROBLEMS IN THE HEART

When we have a problem in our heart, God could plainly tell us what He sees. But would we be *convinced* deep down inside? Usually it takes a fiery trial to provoke a deep-rooted problem to come out and rear its ugly head (cf. Acts 28:3). We are persuaded of our problem *only* after it surfaces and comes out of our mouth time after time. Our problem can be well hidden and lie dormant within us for years until a hot trial and a unique set of circumstances causes it to surface. For example, Job's trial went on for months until what was down deep in his heart came to the surface and was blurted out of his mouth time and time again. Then Job was convinced of his need! The Lord warned Peter, "You will deny Me three times." Peter argued vehemently with the Lord that this was not in his heart. Even the Lord could not convince him. Therefore, the Lord had to stand back and allow *experience* to convince him. It is inborn in the heart of man to argue with God—much more than we realize!

## OUR HEART IS A GARDEN

When God planted the Garden of Eden, He also planted a garden *within man*. Our heart is often likened unto a garden in the Word of God. Scripture often draws our attention to what is growing in our lives and what kind of fruit is being produced within us. What we allow to be *sown* in our hearts will surely bear fruit. Truly, we will *reap* what we sow. And there will be fruit, not only from what we sow in our own hearts, but what we sow in the hearts of others, especially our children. By our *words, actions, and attitudes*, we are constantly "sowing." The condition of our garden is the most precious possession we have! What is growing in the inner garden of our lives?

### Fallow Ground—The Neglected Garden of the Backslider

Jeremiah told the people—"Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns" (Jer. 4:3). Fallow ground is soil that was once worked and productive but then neglected. Ground that is left to itself hardens over and begins to grow thorns and thistles. Through carelessness and *neglect* the people's hearts had become hardened and thorns were growing there instead of good fruit. Fallow ground represents the heart of a backslider.

### Thorns or Herbs

*Thorns and briers* represent the works of the flesh (cf. Mk. 4:18-19). *Herbs*, on the other hand, represent the fruit of the Spirit. (The nine herbs mentioned in Song 4:12-14 are analogous to the nine fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.) Paul admonished the Hebrew believers for bearing briers and thorns in their lives. He was "persuaded better things of them" (Heb. 6:7-9).

### The Father Will Uproot Everything He Did Not Plant

"*Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*" (Mt.15:13). There are seeds growing within us that were sown many years ago (ideas, impressions, imaginations, traumas, words). Over the process of time these have grown and have become mighty within us. Some of these "seeds" are now producing the wrong fruit. Certain growths and bondages (such as depression, pride, and worry) may have been there so long that they have actually grown into large trees which must be *hewn down*.

## Every Wrong “Tree” Will Be Hewn Down

“And now is the axe laid to the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Mt. 3:10). These evil growths must be cut down by the Word of the Lord and by much intercession. As we are praying, we are chipping away at these *trees*. As we continue to pray and not faint, that *tree* will come down. These trees must be cut down because their evil roots are taking away nourishment from the other areas of our garden. And remember, even when a tree is cut down there is a *stump*, and it could grow back again! Therefore, we should ask God to deal with the roots. The question is—“Why did it grow in my heart in the first place? What climate made it thrive so well?”

The Lord desires *each* of our gardens to be “tilled and sown” (Eze. 36:9), not fallow. He desires every part of our garden to be beautiful and productive. As the stones of rebellion and hardness are removed, and as we attend to our garden diligently, we can eventually become *as the garden of Eden* (Ezek. 36:35). God wants our garden to be a well-watered paradise (Jer. 31:12; Psa.1:3).

## Beware of the Roots of Bitterness

What we sow in our garden is what we will reap! What are we cultivating and nourishing within? If we are sowing fleshly seeds we will reap sorrow. But if we are sowing spiritual seeds we will reap *life*. If the choicest seed of the Word of God is being planted deep within our hearts, the finest fruit of the Spirit will come forth. Fruit, however, takes time and growth. Paul says, *we will reap if we faint not* (Gal. 6:9). Beware, though; for if discord and gossip are being received into fertile soil, the fruit of that will be bitterness. Bitterness is one plant that can spring up overnight (Heb.12:15; Prov. 6:19). If the root of bitterness is not dealt with immediately, it will continue to grow until our whole garden is overrun and destroyed!

Parents cannot dare to allow their hearts to be *offended* and then criticize the church and pastor. That would plant the same seed in the impressionable hearts of their children. The children will also take up your offense and backslide grievously. Parents, please guard against negative tones and criticism against the church, the leadership, and spiritual things in general. It could save your home and your children. Parents who are respectful create the same respect in their offspring. According to Genesis 1:21-25, 5:3, we reproduce exactly what we are. Truly, we shall reap what we have been sowing!

## The Kind of Heart Christ Wants to Enter

The Song of Solomon 4:12-16, 5:1 is the picture of a garden into which the Lord wants to enter. Note again that the nine herbs of 4:12-14 are analogous to the nine fruits of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. This is what the Lord wants flourishing within each believer. All thorns, stones, hardness, and other evil growths must be rooted out. Let God remove faults when your ground is soft and moist from being in His presence. Other deep-rooted problems may require more time and some long “hewing.”

Song of Solomon 5:1. “*I am come into my garden*” is referring to a new entrance of the Lord into the life of one who has given diligent attention to his garden. Allow God to turn over and uproot every area of your life that is not pleasing to Him so that He may plant something divine in its place. Pray that every area of your garden will bear good fruit and send forth a lovely fragrance unto Him.

During Job's trial, the Lord overturned a new area of Job's life. God had lowered His plow deeper into his heart, exposing old stones and roots to the light of day. When God had finished His work, He made a new entrance into Job's life. Job's inner life was a magnificent paradise to the Lord.

### **The Fruit of the Lips / Thoughts**

The book of Proverbs speaks often of the power of the tongue (Prov.12:14, 18:20,21). Our mouth is continually *planting* something in the hearts of others—good or bad. Thus, our lips produce fruit! Think of it—our mouth is planting seeds all the time. I hope we are not guilty of sowing *discord*. Also our thoughts bring forth fruit (cf. Jer. 6:19). Thoughts become words and produce fruit.

May we ever allow our Heavenly Husbandman to prune away from our hearts everything that is excessive (Jn.15:1-3)! When there is good fruit in our lives, God will want to share that fruit everywhere. *“He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit”* (Isa. 27:6).

*“As the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations”* (Isa. 61:11). In order for righteousness and praise to spring forth in the nations, someone must go to the nations and plant those things first. Ask God to cultivate excellent fruit in your garden, so that you may plant those seeds in the nations to which you have been called (Psa.126:6).

#### SUMMARY—THE GARDEN OF OUR HEART

- Our heart is a garden. Out of the garden of our heart springs all fruit—whether good or bad.
- God desires to remove all stones (hardness and resistance), and thorns (works of the flesh).
- We have heart problems (from things sown in our hearts) and often we are unaware of them.
- Even when God tells us about our need, we still are not convinced. *Experience* must convince us.
- Some things have grown in our hearts so long that they must be hewn down as trees. (Mt. 3:10)
- Fallow ground is ground that is neglected, becoming hard and thorny. (Jer. 4:3)
- Wrong growths in our garden take away nourishment from other good plantings.
- The root of bitterness can spring up overnight (Heb.12:15). Hearts must be guarded continually.
- We reap what we allow to be sown in our garden, and what we allow to be sown in our children.
- We are constantly *sowing* by our attitudes, words, actions, and meditations.
- The sowing of discord destroys and separates many friendships. God hates it. (Prov. 6:16-19)
- The nine herbs of Song 4:12-16 answer to the nine fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.
- The Lord wants to come into a garden (cf. Song 4:12-16) and share the fruits with others. (5:1)
- When there is good fruit in our lives, God wants to share it *everywhere*. (Isa. 27:6)
- When God was finished in Job's garden, He made a new entrance into his life.
- God has shared the fruit of Job's garden around the world for thousands of years.
- God desires all our garden to be tilled and productive and become like Eden. (Ezek. 36:9,35)
- Righteousness and praise can only be planted by those who have it in their hearts. (Isa. 61:11)

# THE RIGHT OF THE FIRSTBORN

## The Double Portion

### Introduction

In Scripture the firstborn son inherited special *privileges*. The position of firstborn was one of great honor and responsibility. In the absence of the father he had authority over his brethren, as is illustrated in Genesis 37:20-30. Also, the firstborn or elder brother was highly revered and feared by his younger brothers. When Jacob's sons plotted against their younger brother, Joseph, it was the voice of Reuben the firstborn that saved Joseph from death (Gen. 37:21-22).

The firstborn also had special *responsibilities*, for he was accountable and answerable to the father for the welfare of his younger brothers and sisters. Reuben was very distressed when he returned unsuccessfully to the pit to retrieve Joseph. He cried in horror, "I cannot find Joseph, how can I ever face my father" (Gen. 37:29-30).

Not only did the firstborn rank highest after the father, at death he succeeded his father as the head of the home and received as his share of the inheritance *a double portion* (Deut. 21:15-17). When a man divided up his inheritance among his sons, if he had seven sons he divided the inheritance into eight equal shares, giving two shares to the firstborn and one equal share to the others. Thus, there was a great *distinction* between a son and a *firstborn* son.

### Firstborns Receive the Kingdom

2 Chronicles 21:1-3 differentiates between sons and firstborn sons. King Jehoshaphat passed from the earth, having divided up his inheritance as follows: All his sons were given great and lavish gifts, but to his firstborn son, Jehoram, was given *the kingdom*. There is a great difference between wonderful gifts, and receiving the throne. The throne is for kings! And although all believers are called to be formed into kings and priests (Rev. 5:9-10, Ex.19:6), there are two supreme reasons a believer disqualifies himself from becoming a king and priest—(read 1 Samuel 15:23, Hosea 4:6).

### Trademarks of the Firstborn

- **Power and authority among his brethren**
- **Dignity, majesty, reverence**
- **Responsibility for younger brothers and sisters**
- **Head of the home in the absence of the father**
- **A double portion of the inheritance**
- **The rights of kingship and priesthood**

The message of the firstborn is also a strong theme of the *New Testament*, and it is especially seen in the inspired epistles of the Apostle Paul. Christ is revealed as the Firstborn of many brethren, Firstborn of the creation, and the Firstborn over death. But then in Hebrews 12:23, Paul refers to "the Church of the firstborn [ones]." In the original Greek the *firstborn* is plural. Thus, there is a special group of believers who are *firstborn ones* among their brethren.



- Romans 8:28-29—Christ is “the firstborn among many brethren.” (cf. Psalm 89:27). Jesus is our Elder Brother. He has authority and power over us, His younger brothers and sisters. He is the head of the Church. He is revered and feared.
- Colossians 1:15-17—Christ is “the firstborn of every creature.” Not only is He the firstborn among many brethren and the head of the Church, He also has power and authority over the whole creation and universe, for He created them. His Name is above every other name (Phil. 2:9-11, Matt. 28:18). He has authority over all men, angels, principalities and powers. He is King of all kings, and Lord of all lords.
- Colossians 1:18, Revelation 1:5—Christ is “the firstborn from the dead.” Jesus has complete power and authority over death. Death is afraid of Him and bows before Him. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, and has the keys of death and hell (Rev.1:18, John 11:25).
- Hebrews 12:22-23—“the Church of the *firstborn [ones.]*” Here is a group of devout believers who have ascended Mount Zion and are *firstborn* among their brethren. These are endowed with the *double portion* of God's Spirit.

## **THE DOUBLE PORTION**

### **Given to the Church of the Firstborn Ones**

In Hebrews 12:22-23, Paul mentions a special group of *firstborn ones* who have fully ascended Mount Zion. There is a Mount Zion in Jerusalem *on earth*, and there is a Mount Zion in New Jerusalem *in heaven* (cf. Rev.14:1-5; 21:2). The Zion on earth is *symbolic* of the Zion in heaven. King David captured this little hill, pitched a tent on it, and placed the ark of the covenant therein (2 Sam. 5:7, 1 Chron. 11:5, 15:1, 16:1). From that time forward Mount Zion took on significance and became *the holy hill*. The ark of the covenant, representing God's presence and glory, rested atop the hill and this caused the hill to become holy. The Holy One was there.

King David and others made reference to Zion on numerous occasions in the Psalms and elsewhere. Zion was God's habitation (Psa.132:13; 87:2; 2:6). But then the Holy Spirit sounded forth a challenge through David, saying, “Who shall *ascend* the hill of the Lord, or who shall *stand* in His holy place?” “Lord, who shall *abide* in thy tabernacle? who shall  *dwell* in thy holy hill?” (Psa.15:1-5; 24:3-5). Thus, there are high qualifications to be met in order to ascend and abide on this holy hill, for this is God's holy habitation. Those who ascend this mountain have special privileges and become deliverers (Obadiah 1:17, 21). Zion is the place of the double portion, the habitation of the firstborn ones. Thus, we could say that Job was a man who ascended this mountain spiritually, for Job was a man with the double portion.

Hebrews 12:22-23 tells us that those who have ascended Zion's hill and fulfilled the qualifications are *firstborn ones*. On Mount Zion is the assembly of the firstborn ones. In that same chapter (Heb.12:16-17) we find a solemn warning to *New Testament* believers not to sell their birthright as Esau. Many are *called* to ascend this lofty mountain, but few are *chosen*. Many are called to be *firstborn* and have the double portion, but few qualify. Remember, it is one thing to *come* to Mount Zion as it says in Hebrews 12:22, but it is another thing to *ascend* and *abide* there. Reuben forfeited his birthright because of his moral instability and incest (1 Chron. 5:1-2).



**Thus, there are certain ones among God's people whom God selects to be *firstborn ones* among their brethren. These shall have a double inheritance, a double portion of God's Spirit, and double honor. Also, they will have double responsibility to look after the welfare of their younger brothers and sisters in Christ. Will you or I be a firstborn? Will we meet the standards or does God have to look for someone else? I would like to present several examples of men who were firstborn among their brethren, and the reasons they were chosen.**

## ***EXAMPLES OF FIRSTBORN ONES***

### **JOB**

**“Also the Lord gave Job twice  
as much as he had before” 42:10**

Job was a man with the double portion. He truly was a firstborn among many brethren. In fact, the Lord said, “There is none like him in the earth, one who fears God and [shuns] evil” (Job 1:8). God gives the double portion to men and women who are good *role models*, whom others can pattern themselves after. God looks for people of sterling quality, people whose lives He can *reproduce* in many others. When God finds a man who has met the qualifications, He will say, “Now here is a good ensample. I want many others who are just like this one.” He will take that man and reproduce him in the lives of others. He will make him an elder brother to many. Therefore, God will give him an extra portion of His Spirit to bear the added responsibility of being a firstborn among the brethren.

#### A Home in Order

Job's priorities were in proper perspective. God testified of Job's excellent character in chapter 1:1, but then in the next four verses we understand the reason God had such respect for him (1:2-5). Job was a family man! He always wanted to know *where* his children were, and *what* they were doing. We have observed over the years that the man who fails as a father in the natural, fails as a spiritual father, too. This observation is also confirmed by God's Word which states, “*For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God*” (1 Tim. 3:4-5). The first qualification for holding a spiritual office is a home that is in order (1 Tim. 3:1-7; 3:12; Tit. 1:5-9). If we fail in natural things—(marriage, children, use of money, unfaithfulness in secular work) we then disqualify ourselves from spiritual promotion. The way we handle *natural* affairs is indicative of how we will do in the *spiritual* (Lk.16:10-12).

Therefore, the first qualification for being firstborn among many brethren, is a home that is in order and at peace. The Church family must be able to see that Christianity really works *in the home* of their spiritual leader. Remember, the Church is simply a collection of *families*. If Christianity does not work at home, it will never work at church.

Not only was Job a good *role model* for husbands and fathers, he was also sensitive to the needs of the poor and the oppressed (Job 29:12-17; 31:13-22). Job was morally pure, guarding carefully his eyes and emotions (31:1-12). He was a man of vision with a sense of destiny. He knew where he was headed because he had direction and promises from God (19:25-27). Job served God, not for the benefits, but because he loved God. And he gained authority over Satan by the word of his testimony when he declared, “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord,” even after he had lost everything. Job was a man who was purged from self-righteousness, learning *never* to find fault with God. The summary of Job's life on the next page indicates what God looks for in a man who would be firstborn.

**JOB—FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN**  
(qualities found in firstborns)

- A man whose home and family are in order, and a good role model to husbands and fathers.
- A man who was sensitive to the poor and afflicted.
- A man with pure motives who served God because he loved Him, not for self-seeking desires.
- A man of vision and purpose. (This urged him to live a holy life.)
- A man of moral purity who kept his eyes and emotions where they belonged, fearing God.
- A man of meekness, purged from accusation against God and the “*it's not fair*” syndrome.

**ELISHA—ANOTHER FIRSTBORN**

“And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a  
double portion of thy spirit be upon me.”

2 Kings 2:9

We are looking at the lives of certain ones in Scripture who inherited the blessing of the firstborn. Elisha is another classic example. Elisha was not a son who inherited the blessing from a *natural* father, but from a spiritual father—Elijah. The prophet Elijah had many *spiritual sons*. He raised up many young men who would later become prophets to the nation. Elisha was one of those sons and he was among many young brethren who were peers. Elisha, however, had several characteristics that made him head and shoulders above all his brethren.

Elisha was a servant! He was industrious, hard-working, steadfast, and loyal. We find him laboring in the field with twelve yoke of oxen when he is first mentioned in Scripture (1 Kg.19:19). Elisha never allowed boredom or passivity to rule his life. He was a man of purpose.

Also, he stood the test of *time*. Immediately upon receiving the call of God, he forsook the past and dedicated himself to serving his master, Elijah, in menial affairs for many years (2 Kgs. 3:11). Elisha was willing to take the low place as he submitted to the trainings and disciplines of his spiritual father. Also, he overcame long periods of dryness and boredom when nothing exciting seemed to be happening.

Elisha was wiser than his brethren, staying close to the side of his spiritual father. Elisha did not commit the tragic mistake so many spiritual sons make later in life. Many “sons,” after a certain amount of growth and success, believe that they have *outgrown* their spiritual parents. Then they have little use for them. Haughtiness sets in as they assume that they have become *significantly superior* to the spiritual fathers who have brought them up and nourished them in the ways of the Lord. Elisha maintained a relationship of love and respect for his father Elijah and this close relationship qualified him for receiving the double portion of the Spirit that rested upon Elijah.

## Firstborn Sons Stay Close to Their Fathers

The Apostle Paul faced this problem constantly with his spiritual children. After sitting under his excellent ministry and receiving several spiritual gifts, many of his sons developed inflated *egos* and assumed that they were much wiser and spiritual than Paul, even excluding him from their fellowship (1 Cor. 8:2; 2 Cor. 13:3; Gal. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:15). However, men of the double portion are different! These continue to honor their father and mother, even when they are old (Prov. 23:22).

Elisha never became arrogant or independent after receiving the good teaching and prophetic mantle from his spiritual father, Elijah. He remained teachable and loyal to his master right up to the time of their parting at Jordan. By this time Elisha was not a youth, he was bald headed (2 Kg. 2:23). God cannot give the double portion to men who are disrespectful to their spiritual fathers for they would reproduce the same in the lives of many others.

Elisha's peers could have had that same close relationship with their spiritual father, had they so desired. Scripture says they followed *afar off* (2 Kg. 2:7). They were spectators rather than participants in what God was doing. They, too, could have had the double portion if they had been *close* enough to the prophet when he was taken up into heaven.

There was a similar situation with the twelve apostles. John leaned upon the bosom of the Lord Jesus Christ, becoming known as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (Jn.13:21-26). Yet, God has no favorites. The Lord wanted all the apostles to be as close as John, but *they* did not have the same *desire*. Surely, every one of us can be as close to the Lord as we wish to be.

Elisha also passed the tests of *rejection* and *discouragement*. Elijah told his pupil to “go back,” or *stay here while I go on*. Elijah continuously gave him opportunities to find an excuse to quit and go home. Not once in Scripture do we find Elijah encouraging Elisha to go on (1 Kg. 19:20; 2 Kg. 2:2; 2:4; 2:6). But Elisha cherished something in his heart that would not be denied. He wanted *a double portion* of his master's anointing. He looked for no excuses to be offended and refused to give up. He plodded on during those humdrum years of menial tasks. Also he kept his spirit open and teachable to his spiritual father, and he maintained a love and respect for him, even in the maturity of his life. Now after years of preparation and testings, the moment had come to receive the second mantle. Read 2 Kings 2:1-15.

**“Ask what I shall do for thee,  
before I be taken away from thee.”  
2 Kings 2:9**

Elisha's immediate response to Elijah's question was—“I [beseech] thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me,” to which Elijah replied; “*Thou hast asked a hard thing*” (2 Kg. 2:10). As we have repeated over and over, a double portion of God's Spirit means double responsibility. It means a heavier load, an intruded-upon lifestyle, and a monumental task to accomplish.

Elijah continues—“Nevertheless, if thou *see me* when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.” The double portion is only given to those who are *very close* to the Lord and to their spiritual fathers. Elisha was *close enough* to receive the second mantle. Other brethren who viewed from *afar off* did not receive the blessing.

“And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him” (2 Kg. 2:15). At the moment Elisha received the double portion, he become firstborn among his many brethren. This *distinguished* him and set him apart. There came upon him an authority that was recognizable, and they acknowledged that special anointing and authority by bowing in reverence. Elisha had become their elder brother, the firstborn among many brethren.

**ELISHA—FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN**  
(qualities found in firstborns)

- **Hard working, industrious, steadfast, loyal; Not ruled by passivity or boredom**
- **Faithful in menial affairs for long periods of time; A true, humble servant**
- **Submitting to the teaching, disciplines, and corrections of a good spiritual father**
- **Never feeling he had *outgrown* his spiritual father or becoming disdainful of him**
- **Overcoming the tests of rejection and discouragement from a spiritual father**
- **Never looking for excuses to quit, be offended, or go back home**
- **Having a heart that hates the love of money (2 Kg. 5:15-16)**

**JOSEPH—ANOTHER FIRSTBORN**

“Moreover I have given to thee  
one portion above thy brethren.”

Genesis 48:22, Ezekiel 47:13

Joseph was a young man who was very endeared to his father, Jacob. We may think that Jacob showed favoritism among his sons, but he had a reason for making Joseph, his eleventh son, the special heir. Joseph was very righteous and deeply spiritual, even as a child. His brothers, on the other hand, were not (Gen. 37:1-11).

Another point to consider is this—God knows what every man or woman will do with the promises and gifts He entrusts to them. This is the reason God chose Jacob instead of Esau to have the birthright, even before they were born (Gen. 25:22-26). God knew that Esau, the elder brother, would take the birthright lightly. Therefore, God gave it to Jacob.

God had a very important plan for Joseph's generation. There was going to be a severe famine in that part of the world and He needed a special man with unusual answers for the coming crisis. Becoming that special deliverer required immense preparation. All of Joseph's brethren failed the tests, although none of them realized that God was testing them. They were unable and *unwilling* to pay the price. The cost of being a deliverer to *any* generation is very high.

## The Cost of Being a Deliverer

Joseph was rejected by his brethren. In fact, their envy and hatred brought about a plot to kill him (Gen. 37:18-20). Being rejected by his brethren was painful enough, but they hated him enough to kill him. Why was there such envy and jealousy among the brethren? It is *not* natural for brothers and sisters to hate and envy each other. The answer lies in the kind of home they grew up in. Jacob married several women, and there was constant envy and strife (Gen. 30:1-16). Therefore, the children had the problems of the parents. Polygamy was never blessed, not once, in Scripture.

Reuben protected Joseph by putting him in a pit; but in Reuben's absence he was drawn out and sold as a slave into Egypt. Therefore, in addition to growing up in an unhappy home, he was rejected by his own brethren, sold as a slave, and exiled into a foreign country. While in Egypt, he was accused of a crime of which he was totally innocent (Gen. 39:7-23). Thus, his reputation was ruined and he was plummeted to the depths of despondency in a dungeon for about another seven years. Yet God was with him, and was testing him (Psa.105:16-19; Gen. 49:22-24).

Thus, we see that Joseph had to *overcome* a bad childhood and home life, rejection and cruelty of the brethren, exile, slavery, loneliness, homesickness, sexual temptations, false accusations, imprisonment, a ruined reputation, and many other injustices. In addition to all of these, he had to wait out long and painful delays and battle against tremendous doubt, discouragement, and despondency. Yet, every injustice became his servant to move him closer to the throne. Every delay, heartache, and difficulty was building iron into his soul for the enormous task he was called to perform. Joseph fully understood that God was using every injustice to bless and exalt him. This enabled him to have a great capacity to *forgive* his brethren and emerge as the firstborn among all the brethren (see Genesis 45:4-8; 50:20; 1 Chronicles 5:1-2).

### **JOSEPH—FIRSTBORN AMONG THE BRETHREN (qualities found in firstborns)**

- **He overcame the scars of a bad childhood and unhappy home life.**
- **He was able to forgive the brethren who had rejected and afflicted him.**
- **He endured loneliness, homesickness, and foreign circumstances.**
- **He maintained the faith during dark times of discouragement and imprisonment.**
- **Joseph kept himself morally pure by *running* from temptation.**
- **He fully understood that God has a blessing in every injustice.**
- **Joseph lived a *separated* life unto God. (Gen. 49:26)**

## THE LEVITES—A WHOLE TRIBE OF FIRSTBORNS

**“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,  
Take the Levites *instead* of all the firstborn  
among the children of Israel.” (Numbers 3:44-45)**

God's original purpose was to take the firstborn sons of *every tribe* in Israel and make them priests unto Himself and unto the nation. The blessing of being a firstborn enabled a man to have special access to God and the privilege of handling the priestly affairs of God's sanctuary. Firstborns were given a special ministry unto the Lord and unto the people. That special ministerial anointing opened up an understanding of the ways of God and the Word of God.

### Birthrights Can Be Lost

After the shameful apostasy of *the golden calf episode*, however, God changed His mind. Taking away the right of the firstborn from the other tribes, God gave it to the whole tribe of Levi instead. Originally every firstborn of every tribe would have been priests unto God and the people. Instead, God revoked their birthright and gave it uniquely to the Levites (Numbers 3:6; 3:9-12; 3:41; 3:45; 8:6; 8:14-16; 8:18). Here we see the sale of the birthright by a whole nation.

We do not know when we are being tested. Israel had come out of Egypt several months earlier. They came to Mount Sinai and remained there for eleven months—a narrative recorded in 59 consecutive chapters (from Exodus 19:1 to Numbers 10:11). Moses went up to the Mount for forty days and here was the test—the test of *delay*. Israel grew restless, erecting a golden calf for their new god. When Moses returned to the foot of the mountain and beheld their wickedness, he drew a line and demanded, “Who is on the Lord's side?” (Read Exodus 32:1-28). The whole tribe of Levi quickly sided with the Lord and with Moses. The Lord, through Moses, then commanded the Levites to take their swords and slay iniquity in the camp. The Levites responded promptly to His command.

God did not forget what happened at the bottom of Sinai. A whole nation had failed the test. The Lord was so grieved with the fickleness and wickedness of His people that He decided at that moment to take away their birthrights and give it to one tribe who honored Him. God would not have a fickle, immoral, idolatrous, and rebellious priesthood. God would not give a double portion of His Spirit to men who handled the sacred things of God lightly. He looked elsewhere for a Godlier breed.

God had observed the response of the tribe of Levi during the time of moral declension in Israel. He saw in Levi a quality that would do the right thing (not the popular thing) when the pressure was on. Levi was willing to use the sword even on his own flesh, even on his own brethren for the sake of righteousness. These are qualities God looks for in firstborns.

How often when something touches our own flesh or our family are we tempted to *change* or *bend* the Word of God. We cannot be a firstborn if we are unwilling to use the sword on our own flesh or if we resort to sympathy or humanism on the day's important issues (Jer. 48:10).

God gave the priesthood to Levi *instead* of giving it to all the other firstborns of Israel (Dt. 33:8-11). This was the transferal of the birthright from a whole nation to a single tribe. God's selection of Levi was at a time when the nation was unaware that they were being tested. The Lord observed that the Levites were more willing to please God than to please even their closest friends and family (Dt. 33:9).



Remember, it was essentially the *Levites* (those with the birthright and double portion) who ascended Mount Zion in David's time. Those who met the qualifications for being on Zion's hill were mainly Levites (Psa.15:1-5, 24:3-5, 1 Chron.16:1-6). The summit of Mount Zion is reserved uniquely for the “church of the firstborn ones” (Heb.12:22-23, cf. Rev.14:1-5). This is a very special group.

**THE LEVITES—FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN**  
(qualities found in firstborns)

- **These sided with God and righteousness during times of moral declension.**
- **They would not compromise but chose to do the right thing instead of the popular thing.**
- **The Levites put God first, even before human love, friends, and the pressure of family.**
- **They allowed God to choose their mates, and were not disobedient concerning marriage.**  
(See Lev. 21:7)

**THE LOSS OF A BIRTHRIGHT**  
(A Warning to New Testament Believers)

The subject of the birthright is not just an outdated series of accounts recorded for us in the Old Testament. The *New Testament* also is filled with the firstborn message. New Testament believers are warned and exhorted not to sell their birthrights as did Esau (Heb.12:15-17). May I suggest, however, that it is irrelevant whether the exhortation came from the Old or New Testaments, since “*All scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). When Paul wrote this to Timothy, he was referring not to the New Testament, but the Old. The Old Testament was the only Scripture they had at that time. The New Testament canon was not formed until nearly 400 A.D.

Incest

**“Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph.)”**

(Gen. 35:22; 49:3-4; 1 Chron. 5:1-2). Reuben was morally unstable. His father Jacob said of him prophetically, “*Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.*” He committed incest with one of his father's wives. After that his father did not trust him. Therefore, Jacob took the birthright away from Reuben and transferred it to Joseph. Immorality and incest makes a man unstable and untrustworthy, and it is very possible to lose the birthright because of this. We must cry out to God to cleanse our hearts of lust and vile affections, or we will end up surrendering our crown.

## Profanity

**“Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright” (Heb. 12:16)**

Esau is the prime example in Scripture of those who sell their birthrights. He was termed *profane*. To be profane means to be irreverent, disrespectful, and impious. It means to treat sacred things lightly and disdainfully. Esau despised his birthright by letting it go in exchange for a bowl of lentils when he was hungry (Gen. 25:29-34). This would be indicative of someone who sold his ministry, marriage, reputation, and his soul for pornography and lust on the internet. Esau lacked long range vision, living only for *today* and his present appetites.

God saw what kind of heart he had, even before he was born. Therefore, God declared, even before birth, “the elder shall serve the younger” (Gen. 25:23). God determined to give the birthright to Jacob because Esau treated it so lightly. Esau had no fear of coming short of the purposes of God for his life (Heb. 4:1). Later, when he saw what he had lost, he wanted it back with tears and wailing, but it was irretrievable (Heb.12:17). He had made his decision and it was irrevocable.

### Impatience, Idolatry, Rebellion, Immorality

**“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we [do not know] what is become of him.” Exodus 32:1**

The account given in Exodus chapter 32 is the forfeiture of the birthright by a whole nation. It was given to the tribe of Levi instead. Things were just not happening fast enough for Israel. They were in a dry, boring wilderness. Moses had been gone for weeks and God was silent. They missed the “good times” back in worldly Egypt. The *delay* was engineered by God to test the people. The Lord wanted to see what their motive was for serving Him. Were they serving God for the excitement, the miracles and provision? Or were they serving God simply because He is worthy, and because they loved Him? The setting up of a new god after forty days gave God His answer!

Some Christians lose their birthrights because of hastiness. *The test of time* is one of the greatest evidences of our commitment to God. Many grow impatient, compromise the truths they know, and make wrong marriages. How important it is to be obedient on the question of marriage in order to preserve for ourselves the right of the firstborn. A wrong marriage can hinder or even prohibit a man or woman from fulfilling their divine call. Once we have made that lifelong vow and commitment to God in marriage, we cannot change our mind. Therefore, we should approach the subject of marriage with one main thing in mind—will this union bring glory to God and help me fulfill God's call? We must not be self-willed on the issue of marriage—“This is the one I want; I don't care what anyone else thinks, or what God thinks.” We should fear God and say, “Lord, You alone know the heart. Which one is the best for me? Help me to choose Your choice.”

**“For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that *waiteth* for him.”**

Isaiah 64:4

## ***QUALITIES FOUND IN FIRSTBORNS***

### **Summary:**

- **A home and family in order — A good *role model* for spouses**
- **Sensitivity to the needs of the poor and afflicted**
- **Purity of motives —Serving God out of love, not self-seeking motives**
- **Having vision and a sense of destiny which urges one to live a holy life**
- **Moral purity— fixing the eyes and desires where they belong — Possessing holy fear**
- **Totally cleansed of accusation against God and the “*it's not fair*” syndrome**
- **Diligent, industrious, steadfast, loyal — Not bogged down with *boredom* and *passivity***
- **Faithful in menial affairs for long periods of time — A true, humble servant**
- **Submitting to the teaching, disciplines, and corrections of good spiritual fathers**
- **Never feeling “*I have outgrown my spiritual fathers,*” and becoming disdainful of them**
- **Able to overcome the tests of *rejection* and *discouragement* from a spiritual father**
- **Never looking for excuses to quit, be offended, or go back home**
- **Having a heart that is cleansed from the love of money**
- **Able to overcome the scars of a bad childhood and unhappy home life**
- **Forgiving brethren who rejected and afflicted him**
- **Enduring loneliness, homesickness, and foreign circumstances**
- **Maintaining the faith during dark times of discouragement and *imprisonment***
- **Keeping oneself morally pure by running from temptation**
- **Having understanding that God has a blessing in every *injustice***
- **Living a separated life unto God**
- **Siding with God and righteousness during times of moral declension**
- **Refusing to compromise; choosing to do the right thing instead of what is popular**
- **Willing to put God first, even before friends and the pressure of family**
- **Willing to allow God to choose their mates and not be *disobedient* concerning marriage**
- **Willing to wait for God's time and endure delays**
- **Highly treasuring the things of God, and never treating them lightly**
- **Having long range vision, not making important decisions by present emotions**

# Remembering the Purpose of Tests

“What is man that thou shouldest magnify him?  
and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?  
And that thou shouldest visit him every morning,  
and *try* him every moment?” Job 7:17-18

## Conclusion

### God Tests us:

- To see of what we are made.
- To see what our motives are, and what our real needs are.
- To see if God is *number one* in our lives (Gen. 22:1-2; Job 1:8-12; Deut. 13:1-3).
- To see if we are worthy of the promises of God, and loyal to the truths He has entrusted to us.
- To see if we are able to receive the power we have asked of God. The greater the power we want to receive from God, the greater will be our tests.
- To see if we are worthy to take the positions Satan and his angels have forfeited.
- To see if we qualify to be His Bride, and to be at the marriage feast. (Rev.19:9)
- To see if we qualify to be in the first resurrection, judge angels, and rule and reign with Christ.
- To see if we are only serving God for blessings and prestige, or simply because we love Him.
- To make us more righteous and holy.
- To bring a greater revelation of the Lord to our lives.
- To bless our latter end, to exalt us, and give us an eternal name.
- To bring new grace into our lives by being in a new low place. (Grace is given to the *lowly*.)
- To give God an answer, that He in turn may give to His adversaries.

**God has set His heart upon man and is testing him every moment. Tests are very important. This is the reason we are on this earth— to be tested. We cannot come to the bigger tests unless we pass the smaller ones first. The passing or failing of our tests determines our eternal position in heaven. Often we do not know *when* we are being tested. Therefore, we should be more conscious of the fact that we are being *watched*. We are a spectacle of men and angels. We are under the scrutiny of demons, principalities and powers, the world, but most of all, we are being observed by God Himself. Therefore, we must ask God for grace to do the right thing and to make the right decisions when we are under pressure and in a time of testing.**