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For Grandparents, Parents and Seniors

By Rick Shrader

Trials on the Road

We have been dealing with our walk with God and the junctions in the road. On this road there are many things including blessings, answers to prayer, changes in direction. One of the most difficult things to understand and deal with is a trial that God brings into our lives.

The Bible is full of examples and admonitions concerning trials. The earliest of these in the biblical text is the trial of Job. Job probably lived in the days of the Patriarchs and the book of Job could be the first inspired book in the Bible. In the midst of his trials, Job gives us one of the most oft quoted passages about trials: “But He knows the way that I take; when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). These three statements are encouragement to us.

He knows the way that I take. We serve an omniscient God Whose knowledge is beyond our comprehension. “Who hath known the mind of the Lord?” (Rom 11:34). Yet God, while seeing every movement of His creation, takes special interest in the lives of His people. Jesus told us that God sees every sparrow that falls, every flower of the field that grows, and that He knows the number of hairs on every head of every person in the world (some of us are of less trouble to Him than others)! In addition, God hears every prayer of every believer in the world at any given time, even if those prayers are mere thoughts (He declares our every thought, Amos 4:13). I am reminding us that this same God sees every detail of the trial you are going through right now. It is popular today to be amazed at AI (artificial intelligence—and it is humanly amazing I guess). But I choose rather to trust in EI (“Now unto the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only wise God”!! 1 Tim 1:17). Be assured with Job from centuries past, He knows the way you take.

When He has tried me. Not only does God know our path, He has built into that path lessons to make us more wise and holy. “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience” (Jas 1:2-3). Though our parents chastened us, “He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness” (Heb 12:10). He knew this trial was coming when He created the world and then put you in it! Remember the great cloud of witnesses that have gone before us (Heb 11), including patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and those in the church. Though we have an enemy who would “sift us as wheat,” our Lord prays for us! He makes intercession for us in heaven, constantly, faithfully, lovingly. Perhaps your trial at this time (and there are numerous kinds in every life) is health, or finances, or family problems, or moral failure, or just not having enough time to do things. Cast your cares on the One Who cares for you! “Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” (1 Pet 4:19).

I shall come forth as gold. Job knew that he would come through his trial in the proper way because God was overseeing the whole process. We need to have the end in sight, whether it is a temporary struggle of this life or the Bema Seat itself where we will find our gold, silver, and precious stones. I have always found comfort in the thought that there will be an end to the present situation, and when that end comes I will be thanking God and rejoicing at what He has taught me. Job saw it and responded well. “And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends . . . The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning” (42:12-12).

Further Thoughts on Trials from Job and Others.

The writer of Hebrews said, “And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets . . . And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (Heb 11:32, 39-40). David was faithful in keeping his head when Saul and Absalom were losing theirs; Joseph was also faithful though his own brothers betrayed him; Daniel was taken from his home which he would never see again only to become the second highest official in Babylon; Peter failed his Lord in a crisis time but was later restored and was used to open the gospel door to the gentiles.

Job’s trial is more accessible because we have the full story in a single volume. We are even taken behind the scenes at the very beginning to see God praising Job to Satan and Satan accusing Job to God. It reminds us that Satan is the accuser of the brethren and that more happens behind the curtain of this present world than we can see. It is amazing (or is it troubling?) what God allowed Satan to do to a blameless and upright man who feared God and shunned evil! Though we wrestle against principalities and powers from the darkness of this world, we hardly ever see the extent of it. What heavenly creatures may be watching the outcome of our struggles?

We know that Job’s friends were of no comfort or help. “Miserable comforters are you all” he said to them (16:2). In the end God warned these “friends” to repent and do right or His judgment would come upon them. Job prayed for them. That act of forgiveness did not replace their need to repent before God, but it reminds us that we should not allow the offenses of others to affect us and burden our souls for years to come. Our forgiveness should always be open and as ready as our Lord to respond. Job’s wife (it’s a good thing we don’t know her name) was also no real comforter. “Do you still hold to your integrity? Curse God and die!” Job’s classic response was, “Shall we not accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” (2:9-10). I have seen that the most difficult trials to face are those one faces alone because loved ones will not share the load. This makes the trial harder and creates even more burdens.

Job’s responses to his trial remind us that though we lose heart for a moment, we do not need to be overcome by the hardship. In his first reply, Job wished he had never been born (chapter 3). But this is to blame God for failing in our life to sustain His purpose. The feeling may tempt us, but we know better. Job also groaned over the depth of God’s allowances. “For the arrows of the Almighty are within me; my spirit drinks in their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me” (6:4). It is always tempting to ask why God is doing what He is doing. Solomon would later say, “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: surely God has appointed the one as well as the other” (Ecc 7:14). In fact, Solomon will remind us, “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting . . . And sorrow is better than laughter . . . The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth” (7:2-4). What do we learn by laughter? But look what we learn at a funeral.

Job also was tempted to be quiet before God and not speak to Him at all (9:1-4). No one can say anything to God that He doesn’t already know and for which He doesn’t already have an answer. Still, we are to pour out our souls to God in the time of our trouble. Job even begged God to speak to him when He seemed so silent (chapter 13). No doubt there are those times when our prayers don’t seem to go past the ceiling. Job even longed for the good days before his trouble came upon him (chapter 29). That sort of feeling sorry for ourselves and looking for happier times can discourage us even more. We should look to the end, when we will praise God for His goodness. Job’s most amazing verses are 19:25-27, “For I know that my Redeemer lives!” In the end Job’s faith sustained him. He did see the end from the beginning and knew that “in my flesh I shall see God.” Even if this trial brings me to an early end, to be absent from the body and present with the Lord is far better.

“This principle likewise moderates that inordinate fear and sorrow to which we are liable upon the prospect or the occurrence of great trials, for which there is a sure support and resource provided in the all-sufficiency of infinite goodness and grace. What a privilege is this, to possess *God in all things* while we have them, and all things in God when they are taken from us!”

John Newton, *Letters of John Newton*, p. 137.