

Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The TREE OF LIFE weekly teaching summary from the week ending April 26, 1998

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Suffering and Solutions

The word of God is alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, separating the fat from the spiritual life which causes laziness thereby allowing the spiritual muscle to wield the sword of truth and power! Truth being POWER! Many people aimlessly trudge through life on a quest for power never realizing that real power is found in divine viewpoint.

God's word offers every Christian incredible power. The power of Bible doctrine resident in the soul of the believer can withstand and overcome any adversity, test, trial, and disaster in life. Divine power is the greatest power ever known in human history. It is by way of divine power that the believer in Christ advances through the three stages of spiritual growth arriving at spiritual maturity where evidence testing is in view. Of course, God will only enter those mature believers whom He knows will pass evidence testing into the excruciating pressure required in glorifying Him in the angelic conflict.

We saw such a One in our Lord Jesus Christ, Mat 4:1-11, when He went through His evidence testing. His three part evidence testing was in relation to the plan of God. Whereas this week we noted Job's three part evidence test which was in relation to the circumstances of life.

It seems many of the Old Testament believers were very wealthy and so the circumstances of life was a more applicable test for their situation, believers such as Moses and Joshua, Noah, and Daniel. By way of contrast, in the church age, in which spirituality is virtually invisible, we seem to see another type of evidence testing, such as that taken by our Lord in relation to the plan of God. Such evidence testing is less visible

and very personal. This is not to say that it involves any less pressure! Far from it, the mature believer must possess an immense resource of doctrine in the soul in order to be entered into evidence testing!

Regardless of which type of evidence testing is in view, Satan is in charge of the interrogation. In fact, it is up to his choice which type of evidence testing the believer is hit with. And hit the believer is! Evidence testing comes without notice and is a complete surprise. It comes upon the mature believer unexpectedly. In fact, often times the believer does not even recognize that he is at spiritual maturity until he realizes that evidence testing is upon him. This is not a cause to fear but actually to rejoice, for it has been graciously granted us to suffer for the namesake of Jesus Christ, Phi 1:29! The intention of Satan, our accuser in cross examination in the angelic conflict, is to apply so much pressure that the former testimony of the mature believer in living out his spiritual life is discredited by the words which come from his own lips. But God would never place upon us more than we can bear, 1Co 10:13. When evidence testing is passed by the mature believer it results in a great phenomenon which very seldom occurs in each generation... a doubling of escrow blessings! Believers who pass evidence testing related to the details of life can anticipate a multiplication of escrow blessings after the testing is complete, Job 42:10-17.

In Job 1:1 we find a description of Job's spiritual maturity, "**blameless**", meaning he was spiritually mature; "**upright**", i.e., with victories in the spiritual life; "**fearing God**", meaning he had personal love for the Lord Jesus Christ; and "**turned away from evil**" insinuating that Job did not become involved with legalism, that he remained grace oriented. Now, Satan's contention was that if God removed Job's escrow blessings and cut off his logistical grace support, Job would curse God! The issue being, is the giver of grace more important than the gifts He gives? God has to be more real to the believer than anything or anyone else around him. This means real in one's thinking not by way of the claims of one's emotions. The challenge in evidence testing is to trust in God no matter how unexplainable or disastrous the suffering may become. God speaks to us through the events in our lives and we must be available to His message without becoming emotional. It is in times of loss and pressure that our true motivation is revealed. The mature believer has the assurance of Rom 8:28 even though there is no apparent explanation or cause for the suffering.

Suffering is a major part of the believers spiritual life and must be viewed properly in order that the believer benefit from it and bring glory to God.

In glorifying God in the angelic conflict there must be realization and appropriation of God's personal love for the believer involved. It is during evidence testing that the mature believer is challenged in relation to his personal love for God and his occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ. The mature believer has the testimony of not quitting on the Lord Jesus Christ and though he does not look for trouble he is prepared for it. Pressure and suffering brings out the best in the positive believer and the worse in the carnal or negative believer. This is why church divisions are brought in, 1Co 11:19.

The entire book of Job encompasses around a nine month period concerning one man's life, Job, and the three parts of his evidence testing. Chapter one shows us Job passing the first part of his evidence testing, the loss of his children, work force, friends, and wealth. Chapter two shows us Job passing the second part of his evidence testing, the loss of his health and social standing, and the pressure of his nagging wife. Chapters three through 37 allows us insight into Job's repeated failures in relation to the third part of his evidence testing, the confrontation of his three legalistic friends claiming Job to be under divine discipline. Not until God rebukes Job in chapter 38 does he finally pass the third part and in chapter 42 receives double his escrow blessings!

In Job 1:13-19 we see four great disasters which occurred in the first part of his three part evidence test:

- 1) His ten children died
- 2) His work force was all killed
- 3) His friends were killed
- 4) He lost all his prosperity and wealth

Yet, he continued to trust God. He did not blame God for the loss but accepted the adversity just as he accepted the prosperity. Job's willingness to continue to trust in God in an imperfect environment filled with disaster was quite a dig to Satan who did not trust in God in perfect environment. And though neither Job's personal love for God nor his integrity had been defeated by Satan, Satan did not admit his loss and further claims that Job is faithful because he still retains his perfect health.

Hence enters the second part of Job's evidence testing, Job 2:1-22, Satan now attacks Job's health, but God limited this attack to his health and not the taking of his actual life. Therefore, Satan inflicted Job with a very painful ailment: skin cancer from the top of his head to the tips of his toes. Job was covered with painful, itchy, burning, running sores all over the surface of his skin where the nerve endings experienced the height of pain. Not only was he experiencing intense pain and uncontrollable itching, he

was also quite a revolting sight! In view of his oozing, runny appearance he was socially ostracized. Had Job derived his self esteem from his appearance he would have been in serious trouble, fortunately his source of strength came from the doctrine in his soul. Through it all Job remained concentrated on the Lord Jesus Christ. This particular test culminated with the addition of the nagging torture of his wife (who Satan chose to leave alive). Though his wife recognized his integrity as still being intact she did not respect it and counselled him to curse God and die, i.e., commit suicide, just as centuries later Satan proposed suicide to our Lord Jesus Christ in His evidence testing, Mat 4:1-11. Yet through it all, Job did not sin with his mouth, he rather extended his integrity to his wife in his answer to her, "**You speak as a foolish woman speaks. Shall we accept good from God and not bad?**", which by the way is the last we hear from her! It is implied that Job had a second wife who was saved and that his second blessing of ten children were also saved. This gives Job 20 children in the eternal state. Carnal believers never admire the integrity of a mature believer, they are either too jealous or guilty to see correctly. She did not share in God's high opinion of her husband since she lacked the doctrinal frame of reference to do so. Her lack of doctrine, which was the most important dimension in her husband's life, caused her to lack the capacity to love him.

The passing of part two of his testing is the last great thing we hear about Job for quite some time. Part three of his evidence testing really threw him into a loop. From chapter three all the way to chapter 31 Job struggles and fails four times in the confrontation with his three legalistic friends who (erroneously) judge his spiritual life. It takes a tremendous friend minus self-righteousness to be a true friend in time of need. Job's three friends were not such types! Eliphaz was the holy roller type functioning in the realm of his limited experience rather than doctrine. Bildad was the religious traditionalist and Zophar was the legalist. Actually, there were four friends present but one remained silent and did not judge Job, his name is Elihu, a younger man who kept his mouth shut and observed the debate against Job. It wasn't until toward the end that Elihu offers Job divine viewpoint.

From chapters four to 28 we embark on an eloquent archaic Hebrew poetic charade offered by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Through this series of debates Job's former friends seek to prove Job's culpability in his suffering. And for the next 28 chapters Job continues to misunderstand what was going on. His social isolation caused him to feel sorry for himself and so fail the test. The intensity of his suffering drove his self-pity to the point of irrationality. This proves that any believer, at any stage of spiritual growth can allow his concentration to stray. Let's take a look at exactly why Job allowed his concentration to stray.

Job's three religious friends came to comfort him, which is the last thing that they served to do! For seven days they stayed with Job in total silence, crying over the sight of Job's misfortune. During this seven day silence each of Job's friends began to speculate about the reason for Job's sudden fall from wealth and prominence. They became fascinated with the sin in Job's life while ignoring their own. Rather than comfort Job they judged him, hence we call them his former friends.

Every member of the human race has a dark side. Some can control it more than others but being of the flesh we all harbor the ability to "go off". Once off the track from thinking doctrine, emotion rules. And, emotion has no ability to rationalize, analyze, synthesize, nor apply doctrine. Emotion judges the situation by what appears to be so which is a direct contradiction of the word of God, Isa 11:3; Joh 7:24. The apostle Peter tells us in 1Pe 4:15 that busy-bodies suffer the same punishment as do murderers, thieves, and evil-doers. These three legalistic, judgmental former friends did not even grant Job the benefit of the doubt. Remember, evidence testing involves suffering without any reason, and Job's buddies were looking for reasons. And if you strain at something hard enough you will come up with some type of reasoning, false reasoning that is! They had no facts upon which to base their erroneous evaluation of Job's sufferings. No one has all the facts except God and that is the way He keeps it. The same adversities in one person's life which constitute the honor of being presented into evidence testing, may be the adversities in another's life which constitute divine discipline, point being we cannot evaluate the reason behind anyone's suffering or misfortune!! When things go wrong in another's life we have absolutely no right to evaluate, why. Overt indications of suffering enable no one to distinguish who is the spiritual loser and who is the spiritual winner. When you judge another you simply condemn yourself according to Rom 2:1. Jam 4:11 tells us that he who judges or speaks against a brother judges Bible doctrine. No one knows the deep intentions, motivations, and thinking of a man except that man himself, 1Co 2:11b.

When a man does not understand another and his ways, he usually resorts to putting him down. Two opposite and yet perfect examples of this are John the Baptist who exemplified the absolute minimum in necessities and they said he was a demon, Luk 7:33. Then came the Lord Jesus Christ eating good food, drinking good wine, and hanging out with the boisterous crowd, they called him a glutton and an alcoholic, Luk 7:34. You just can't win with the judgmental crowd! What generally happens when you evaluate other believers is, if you dislike the person there is a tendency to believe evil about him and if he is going through something then he must be under divine discipline. In contrast, if you like the person, you will refuse to believe any evil things about him and if he is going through something he is being tested by the Lord. In either case our evaluation is

wrong because it is none of our business! And, this is why Pastors should never counsel... no one has all the facts, only God does. Remember what 1Pe 4:15 warns us of intrusion into the privacy of someone else's life as being tantamount to stealing and murder. Judging is not only considered to be a sin in the eyes of God, but a crime. Even if you make an assumption and your doctrine is right, your premise is always wrong. How do we know then, the difference between a right and wrong assumption? The answer is, it is none of your business to know, so no assumption is right. Who can understand his own errors, never mind someone else's, Psa 19:12. This brings out the great transgression noted in Psa 19:13, and that is the sin of presumption.

Job's so called friends began their visit with emotion and compassion and ended their visit with speculation, judging, and maligning. The obvious and immediate lesson here is to avoid judging anyone who is suffering. Job's former friends did a great job of throwing Job into a tizzy. Satan was counting on this which is why he even visited Eliphaz in a dream before he went to see Job. It was not God who gave Eliphaz a vision as he claims, but a demonic spirit. These three caring individuals were used by Satan in an attempt to cause a mature believer to fall. And for a time this plan succeeded. Job was a mature believer who let his emotions take over. Job succumbed to self-pity and was incapable of clearheaded thought thereby entering into self-justification. Job's failure to pass the third test is recorded in Scripture to teach us a valuable lesson. No matter how far we advance in the spiritual life, our human resources cannot cope with extreme disaster. Only divine resources related to Bible doctrine can meet the problems related to severe, prolonged pain and miserable circumstances of life. Job temporarily lost his ability to concentrate, but God remained faithful. God remained true to His promise that He will never allow a believer to be tested beyond his ability, God permitted Job's evidence testing to proceed because He knew Job had not reached the limit of his endurance. Every believer always possesses free will and has the potential for success or failure. Success is never guaranteed in any stage of suffering for blessings, even though the pressure is within the believer's capacity of endurance. And eventually the Bible doctrine in Job's soul proves sufficient to meet his suffering. He recovers from his state of irrationality and regains his divine viewpoint, moving forward to successfully complete evidence testing.

Job's prolonged physical pain sapped his energy. Pain will do that, lack of sleep will do that, as well as other forms of pressure. It takes energy to think and Job is minus that energy. The purpose of this being recorded in the word of God for us is not to bring disgrace to Job but so that all of us will see what we are truly like without the power and grace of God. Without doctrine in the soul being more real to us than the circumstances of life, our pain and suffering will overrule. Humanly speaking, we all

have a breaking point. Human resources can only take us so far, beyond that we have nothing but the resources we have developed and accumulated in Bible class. Doctrine in the soul is the greatest power in human history. As long as a mature believer uses his inventory of metabolized doctrine he will have the ability and the power to handle any suffering that may come his way.

In Job 13:15 we find Job beginning his major change leading to the passing of the third and final part of evidence testing. Job begins to pass the final test beginning with verse 20 of Job chapter 13. He finally rebounds from self-justification and makes a direct appeal to the supreme court of heaven. And after he passes evidence testing and glorifies God in the angelic conflict, Job 42:12 he is awarded twice as many blessing as he had nine months earlier when his evidence testing commenced!

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