

Three Things to Do in Times of Trouble

Introduction

God's people are often in troubles of one sort or another. Trouble is just a fact of life in this sin-cursed world. It was truly said long ago in Job 5:7, "Yet man is **born unto trouble**, as the sparks fly upward." Job himself said in Job 14:1, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and **full of trouble**." Some of the godliest people seem to suffer some of the most severe troubles. David, a man after God's own heart, stated in Psalm 34:6, "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Concerning the fact that the righteous do experience trouble, David said in Psalm 34:17, "The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles."

It is easy to serve the Lord when everything is going smoothly in our lives. We then know that God is smiling on us and we are so thankful for His blessings. However, when trouble comes Satan begins to whisper in our ear that perhaps God does not love us after all. We experience anguish of soul and think that perhaps life is not worth living. The song departs from our lips. The spring disappears from our step. The twinkle is no longer in our eye. The future appears sometimes unbearably dark and foreboding. We sometimes feel very lonely and isolated. We think that perhaps we are the only ones who are in such trouble. Elijah felt this way. He remonstrated with the Lord in Romans 11:3, "Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life." Of course, this was not true, but Elijah, in his depression, thought that it was.

Job's Troubles

I believe that if we look at the individual in the Bible who probably experienced more trouble than anyone else recorded in its pages with the exception of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can learn some valuable lessons on how to behave ourselves and how to think when trouble comes. The Lord, in His marvelous providence, allowed an amazing array of troubles to afflict Job. The Lord did this to demonstrate the awesome power of the faith that He places in the heart of each child of God in regeneration. When God causes one to be born from above He puts faith in the heart and He sustains that faith so that it will never totally fail. That faith may be severely tried by troubles, and it may appear to grow weak and almost non-existent occasionally, but it will never totally fail. This is made plain by 1 John 5:4, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It will be instructive and edifying to examine the trials that came upon Job and how he was blessed of God to react to them. Let us remember that Job was an actual historical figure. He was a real person like we are with the same human limitations and frailties.

Loss of Material Possessions

Our material possessions are very important to most of us. Most people would be quite distressed to lose virtually all that they possess. Many an individual goes through quite a period of depression with the loss of a job. Well, Job had been a very wealthy man and he lost all his riches in a very short period of time. Much of his wealth was embodied in oxen, sheep, camels, and asses. He lost all these in one day. It would be hard enough for a poor man to lose everything that he had, but for a wealthy individual to suddenly be reduced to abject poverty would be quite a trial indeed. This is exactly what happened to Job.

Deprived of His Children

My dear wife and I have suffered the loss of one child and it was hard even though we only had her for a few hours. It would be almost impossible to imagine the shock of losing ten grown children at once! This is what Job suffered. He had seven sons and three daughters. They were taken from him in one blow.

His Wife

When we go through terrible difficulties it is such a blessing to have a faithful wife or husband to go through them with us. When everyone else has forgotten or when no one else understands, our life's companion is there to be a great comfort. Job was deprived even of this. Instead of pointing him to the Lord and praying with and for him, she counseled him to curse God and die. Job had to refer to her as a foolish woman.

Loss of Health

We usually do not appreciate what a tremendous blessing good health is until we lose it. We usually take for granted the blessings of being free from pain, of not being disfigured by disease, etc. Job suffered multiple painful and disfiguring maladies. He was smitten with boils all over his body. He was so disfigured by his disease that he appeared grotesque to his friends when they came to comfort him. In fact, he looked so bad that they were with him for a full week before they even spoke to him. (2:12, 13). He said of his condition that "My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome." (7:5). He said in Job 30:17, 18, "My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest. By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth

me about as the collar of my coat.” He also said in Job 30:30 “My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat.” Obviously Job was a very sick man. He was disfigured and he was in discomfort and pain.

Misunderstood by Friends

True friends are usually very helpful when we are in trouble. They can comfort, console, and reassure us. This was not the case with Job. His so-called friends made all kinds of false and cutting accusations against him. They accused him of engaging in secret sin and thus of bringing all these troubles on himself. (4:7, 8; 8:6) They accused him of being a liar. (11:3). He was falsely accused of cheating people, of abusing the poor, and of being heartless toward widows and orphans. (22:5-9). His friends, kinfolk, and even young children despised him. (19:14-19). It is sometimes amazing when human beings, like vultures, will attack an individual when he is down. This happened to Job.

Deprived of the Manifestation of God’s Presence

Perhaps worse than any other of Job’s very great troubles was the fact that he could not feel the comforting presence of his God. This must have been devastating. Come what may, as long as a child of God can feel the reassuring presence of the Lord he can bear his troubles. However, to be assaulted from without and to not feel God’s presence within, is almost unbearable. Job tried diligently to experience God’s presence, but to no avail. We find this recorded in Job 23:8, 9, “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him...” Job looked for God in every direction but He was not to be found. Would he now just give up in despair? Would he become bitter and turn away from the Lord? Would he follow his wife’s advice and just curse God and die?

A Crucial Time

When real troubles come we often face a crisis. This is a time when people usually turn to the Lord or turn away from the Lord. Satan is always there tempting us to forsake the Lord. He whispers to us that it is no use to serve the Lord. God has forsaken us and we should abandon Him. He will tell us that God doesn’t love us anyway or He would not allow us to get into so much trouble. To my sorrow, I have seen several people who really seemed to love the Lord forsake Him and His people when difficulties entered their lives. Thankfully this has been only a temporary forsaking in some cases. Happily, I have seen excruciating troubles draw some people ever nearer the Lord. As a pastor of over thirty years I have come to be amazed at how some of God’s people have become sweeter in spirit and

stronger in faith as their troubles have mounted and mounted. I have seen beds of the sick and dying become blessed Bethel spots, houses of God and gates to heaven. These people have learned to properly respond to times of agonizing trouble.

The Three Things

We have entitled this article *Three Things to Do in Times of Trouble*. This is based on the three things that Job did when he could not find God, no matter how hard he looked for Him. Remember that Job had experienced an incredible array of external difficulties. He had lost his wealth, his family, fellowship with his wife, his health, the loyalty of his friends, the great respect that he had enjoyed from others. He had lost just about everything worth having. On top of all these things he could not find manifest fellowship with God. What was he to do? He did not depend on his feelings. Feelings and emotions are very important, but we cannot base our actions on them. We must walk by faith; that is, we must wholly rely on the truths revealed to us in God's Word. That is what Job did. There are **three very important things** that Job did when he was at the height of his troubles. Let us look at those three things.

The Word of God

One of the indispensable things that Job did was to be in constant reading and study of God's word. He probably did not feel like reading the word, but he did it anyway. He did not "hit and miss" or behave spasmodically when he read. He placed a **great priority** on the reading and study of that Word. He expressed himself in this way in Job 23:12, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." This is a remarkable statement from one who has just revealed that he did not feel God's comforting presence. Usually we tend to shy away from God's word when we are in a period of spiritual depression. We should, however, do the opposite. When we are down we are usually under Satanic attack. One of the most potent weapons we have against this enemy of our souls is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17). Job must have spent much time in the word of God to esteem it more than his necessary food. He must also have read the word with much regularity.

When we are in depression, we need light and guidance. Psalm 119:130 says, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." David said in Psalm 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

When we are drooping in spirit we need personal revival. One of the most encouraging Scriptures concerning this is found in Psalm 119:50 "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me." The word translated "quicken" here is (**haya**) and among the meanings given for it are "revive from sickness, discouragement, or even death." (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, p.644).

So, dear reader, when you are in trouble spend **much time** in God's word.

Walk in Obedience

A time of trouble and discouragement is potentially a very dangerous time in the life of a believer. Satan whispers to us that God does not love us, so why should we be obedient to Him. The prophet remonstrated thus with Israel in Malachi 3:14, "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?" When Asaph was depressed because he saw the prosperity of the wicked he said in Psalm 73:13, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." Yes, this is a very dangerous time for a child of God.

In times of trouble we must put a double guard on our souls and strive to walk before God in obedience. We may not feel the presence of God, but we must exercise faith and believe His word. Faith tells us that there is great value in being obedient. Speaking of the commandments of the Lord David said, "in keeping of them there is great reward." (Psalm 19:11).

I have known of one man who sadly left the path of obedience when his mother died. I know another young man who temporarily fell into grievous sin when a girl he loved rejected him.

When we are in trouble we must do what Job did. He said "My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips..."

Trust the Lord

I have many times exhorted God's children with the following words, "God has never said to understand Him, but He has told us to trust Him." There are several things that are involved in trusting God. First, we must believe that He is **all-wise**. If He is indeed omniscient, then He knows what is best for us. We think that we know what is best for us but we do not, because we are very limited in our understanding. For example, we may be in danger of being lifted up in pride and may not even be aware of this. God, in His infinite wisdom, knows that this would destroy us, so He mercifully sends chastisement our way to purge us of this pride.

We must also believe that God is **all-powerful**. If He is omnipotent, then He has the **ability** to do for us what needs to be done. Often we would like to do certain things for the welfare of our children, but we don't possess the necessary resources. There is no similar problem with God. His resources are infinite.

Finally we must believe that God actually loves us and is vitally interested in our welfare. This is very necessary, because even if He is wise enough to know what we need, and is powerful enough to provide, He must have a loving disposition toward us to **motivate** Him to deliver us from all our troubles. Satan makes a point of trying to dim the spiritual eyes of God's children so that they do not realize the **incomprehensible love** that God has for all His children. Paul prayed that the saints at Ephesus "May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge..." (Eph. 3:18,19). He demonstrated that God gave the **ultimate proof** of His love for His people when He sent His only begotten Son into the world to suffer and die for them. In Romans 8:32 he pointed out that "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Job manifested his trust in God even though he was mystified by the details of his sufferings. He knew that God was in sovereign control of his life and that these trials were for his ultimate good. Admittedly Job did not always feel this way but he certainly did in Job 23:10, when he said, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job trusted God. He said in another place "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him..." (13:15).

Conclusion

There would be no better way to close these exhortations than to give an unadorned passage from the inspired word of God:

James 5:10, 11 "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

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