

15. Never An Easy Ride

Unlike some of the Bible teachers' comments in these days, the Bible never promises that Christian life would be a easy ride to heaven. The only thing Jesus promised easy is His yoke in Matt 11:30. As a matter of fact, Jesus and the Father in heaven warned us that we will face difficulties and trials and tests time after time. The Bible is full of examples of the saints who went through their share of trials and tests.

Apostle Paul talks about his share of suffering in the midst of God's perfect will in his 2 Cor. 11:23-27.

2 Corinthians 11:23-27 Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness--

A. ATTACK PERMISSION GRANTED

When we decided to walk with the Lord Jesus, from that moment we become satan and his hosts' targets. When we want to walk closer with the Lord and start to serve Him in His kingdom, it get worse. But I do know that the Lord whom I am serving is greater than he that is in the world according to 1 John 4:4. Satan cannot attack and tempt me more than he is allowed to do so by God. We can find the examples in Job 1:12 and 2:6. God gave satan permissions to attack Job within boundaries.

James 5:7-8 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early (Oct & Nov - Autumn rain) and latter rain (April & May - Spring rain). You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

This verse reminds me one of my favorite verse from Galatians.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

This is the very verse that the Holy Spirit used to me to keep me going when I was going through my trial. I fell like I was in the midst of darkness and couldn't find an exit. But I knew that He was with me every step of the way to lead me, guide me, to show me how to walk with Him. Yes, there was the time when I felt like I couldn't take another step, and there was the time I felt like I could care less whether I make or not. There was also the time for thinking about quitting the whole thing. When I was down and out, and cry to Him, He was so near that I almost could touch Him and felt His presence. He embraced me, comforted me, soothed my broken heart and wiped away my tears. Just like a daddy who came to a son who fell and scraped his knee on the ground.

Our God is so gracious and merciful

B. STANDING FIRM IN FAITH

Remember, brothers! We don't have strength to endure what satan can throw at us. At his first shot, we would be out cold. It is not we fight the battle. The battle has

been won by Jesus Christ who is the captain of heavenly hosts. He won the victory on the Cross. All we have to do is, standing firm behind the shield of faith. Believing in His Word and promises which He has never broken, and never will. When the Lord says He will, we can mark it, bank on it, stand on it and take courage from it.

You may think that it is over for you. You will not be forgiven by God. But God says when you come to Him and ask Him for His forgiveness, your sins will not only forgive, but also be forgotten according to Heb 8:12. How can it be? Because He is God and He can do anything He wants.

“Stand Firm” has been mentioned in the Bible for 22 times throughout OT and NT. Everyone of them is connected with faith. We cannot stand firm when we know that we don’t have strength and tactics against our enemy’s power unless we know that our ally, God who protects us. That is faith. Faith is unseen, but believing that God will come through to our rescue.

2 Cor 4:18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

C. NO GRUMBLINGS ALLOWED

James 5:9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

We as Christians, have more fire power against each other than against satan and his demonic forces. We are busy to talk and grumble and slander one another in the name of praying for one another intelligently. When we find out a fellow Christian’s faults and sins, we are supposed to bring to the Lord first and pray and seek His guidance. Then with His permission, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we should go to that person and confront him with the love of Christ to build that person up not to tear down. We are not judges. There is only one Judge and He doesn’t need our help.

Luke 6:37 “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

D. THE BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO ENDURED SUFFERINGS

James 5:10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

Here are a few example of the prophets who went through suffering and showed patience to wait upon God, faith in God and uncompromising attitude for what they believed in.

1) Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

In Daniel 3, they faced the possible sentence of burning to death, because they wouldn’t bow down to worship the image of gold set up by King Nebuchadnezzar. With their refusal, the king threw them into the blazing furnace, then they realized that they were very much alive. The Son of God Himself was there in the fire with them. God came to their rescue. Did you notice that nothing was burned except the rope that bounded them. In other words, if we walk in faith with Jesus, the only thing disappears from our lives is the bondage of satan.

2) Daniel

In Daniel 6, jealous fellow administrators of Daniel conspired to trap Daniel, because he was a much better official than them. Because of their conspiracy, Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. Again, God was faithful to send His angel to shut the mouths of lions so that they wouldn't harm him.

3) Elijah

In 1 King 18, we find Elijah facing Baal's 450 false prophets. Especially, this particular verse needs to be remembered.

1 Kings 18:21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.

4) Job

James 5:11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

We often hear Christian cliches like "Patience of Job". That is wrong! Job was not patient. He was fine at the beginning, but as time went by, he wiggled out. But he persevered throughout that horrible trial.

Psalms 103:8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.

D. APPLICATION

We need to cling onto Him who is mighty and strong, full of mercy and gentle, immortal, invisible, the only wise God in every step of the way whether we are going through good time and bad time.

Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;