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THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” (Heb.5:8-9) Obedience has to be learned and obedience leads to perfection. Jesus carried His obedience to the Father, all the way to the cross. It was not natural thinking that led the Son of God to leave behind the ministry that He had begun, the disciples that He dearly loved, His hopes and desires for His people and much more. Jesus had human emotions; He cried when His friend Lazarus died, and when He saw the darkness of unbelief in Mary and Martha. Jesus was not moving by human emotions; Jesus was moving by obedience to His Father. The Son of God had learned obedience through suffering. Jesus knew that the sufferings of His earthly life were necessary lessons from the Father. Is this how we look at our sufferings? It is perfectly normal to quickly pray for healing or deliverance, but when it does not come right away, or it seemingly gets worse, are we at a loss and in despair? Do we think that God has left us, or perhaps we just don’t have the faith it takes? This is where the acid test of our faith lies. Pentecost taught us about the gifts of the Spirit, so we brace ourselves and begin to rebuke the devil, but the devil we rebuke may never budge at our command, for indeed, it might just be God’s doing.

There came a time when Jesus explained to His disciples that, *“...he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”* (Matt.16:21) The disciples were outraged and indignant. *“Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, (Jesus), saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he (Jesus), turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offense unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”* (Matt.16: 22-23) Is this not the way we quickly react to suffering in our own lives? Are we often rebuking the ways of God, thinking we are coming against Satan? Yes, sufferings are caused by Satan, but God has full power over Satan, and it is God who uses the foe to accomplish His mighty work in us.

SUFFERING AS JOB

God’s ways are not our ways. God’s plan is to have a people in His image and after His likeness. His will is for this people to be His temple, His habitation in the earth. God has chosen a people, within a people, who would think as He does, and care for His creation with love as He does. Only our God, who is life and love can produce such a people. Life always begins small, and grows, even as a small seed becomes a huge tree. God’s creation began as a seed, and has been evolving ever since. God made a seed from Himself, and in order to grow that seed, He created the earth. The first fruit of that seed is seen in an earthen vessel called Jesus. The Holy seed in Jesus, grew and through obedience, became the full image of the Son of God. From the Seed planted in Mary’s earth, Jesus became the temple of God in the earth. Through death and resurrection, Jesus brought forth a new Seed, a Seed that held the full image and likeness of God bodily. Just as Jesus walked through the fires of hell and death on the cross, and overcame and was raised as the first fruit of that Seed, so His Spirit leads us through the fires of hell and death here on earth, to become the same image and likeness of the Son of God.

It was when God found Job walking perfectly before Him, that He turned Satan loose in his life. *“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil...And the Lord said unto Satan, hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God. And escheweth evil?”* (Job 1:1,8) It was God who called Satan to do the work on Job. Job’s friends all sounded wise as they counseled Job and brought up all kinds of reasons why he was suffering so terribly. But none of these reasons were valid before God, for it was God who had called on Satan to test Job to his limits. It was not until Job had finally passed the tests of his faith, that God removed Satan and rewarded Job. The story of Job is for us, the best example of the workings of God in the lives of His called-out people. The friends who constantly advise us according to their own wisdom, are not only people; they are the many thoughts that whirl around continuously in our minds. It was God who began the trouble in Job’s wonderful life, and it was God who gave Satan power over Job. God did not do the dirty work, but He allowed it for His purpose, which was to bring Job up to a higher dimension of life. And so it is for all of God’s creation. The story of Job certainly applies to us at the stage of our journey today.

It is through life, death and resurrection, building, destroying and building again, that God lifts His creation up to a higher dimension in Himself. Satan is God’s perfect destroyer. He is the master of death and hell. But when Jesus went through life, death and resurrection, He came up triumphant over hell and death for the entire creation. He declared, *“I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, amen, and have the keys of hell and death.”* (Rev.1:18) Jesus did not go through His horrific journey just to save a few from hell and death. Jesus did not come to bring more death upon humanity; Jesus defeated the one who held the keys of hell and death, even Satan who is the Master of lies and deceits, and continues to make man believe that his fate depends upon his own faith and ability to attain eternal life. Paul explains, *“For I say, through the grace that is given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”* (Rom.12:3) It is through the experiences of life and the sufferings of this world, that our God reveals Himself to us, and thus our obedience to the faith is tested by fire and grows.

Job’s name means “persecuted, hated.” Adam named all the animals and things of the earth, but God named His people according to their role in this life. God first called Abram, but when he passed the acid test of his faith, and offered his only son Isaac, God changed his name to Abraham, “father of many nations.” It was in Job’s calling to be hated and persecuted. God had prospered him, but much envy and hatred had been built in the hearts of those who called themselves his friends. It was one of Jesus’s own disciples who betrayed Him. It was envy and jealousy that pushed Joseph’s brothers to sell him down to Egypt. They would have killed him, but like Job, God had placed limits on Satan. All who are called of God will suffer and be misunderstood and persecuted by friends, peers, or even relatives. When we come to the place where we can see the hand of God in all these things, when our faith in what God told us at the beginning is not shaken, we are overcomers in Christ, indeed! Father, we thank you for the grace to overcome each day, and to keep our eyes fixed on the One who made the way before us. Jesus told us that the way He went, is the way we must go. *“And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.”* (Jn.14:4,6)

Because He is love, *Jackie Caporaso*