



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Parables Bookshelf - Series 2.7.1

Series 2 of the Parables Bookshelf contains a variety of writings covering a wide range of topics related to the Kingdom of God. These writings originally appeared as posts on the Heart4God website, or the Parables Blog, both of which are the websites of Bible teacher Joseph Herrin.

Waiting, The Ultimate Test

Waiting, the Ultimate Test!

(Written 6-5-2000)

This test has been the most excruciating of all. I have been tempted repeatedly to throw in the towel. At times, only a tremendous fear of missing the will of God and being disqualified to be a partaker of the things reserved for overcomers has kept me to the course. As one of God's prophetesses has recently stated, "Only those who finish the course receive the prize. Don't quit half way through the race."

The test I am speaking of is waiting. I am now in the eighth month of waiting. The trial has been severe because God has selected a path for me that would bring me into opposition with all around me. Christian

brothers and sisters have judged me to be in great disobedience. I have been characterized as arrogant and prideful and wicked. My own family has judged me to be deluded and some have even questioned whether or not I was ever truly saved.

Does this worry you? Do you wonder why so many would judge a Christian brother to be in such gross disobedience? Are you affected by the preponderance of negative opinion? Certainly so many could not be wrong, could they?

Consider Joshua and Caleb re-

turning with 10 other spies to look over the land of their promised inheritance. The land was a veritable fortress. There were walled cities and warriors of great size in the land. Joshua and Caleb did not deny this. They believed, however, that their God was bigger than these obstacles and that the giants before them would simply become their prey.

Not so, the other 10 spies. They judged by appearance. They looked at themselves and were made weak. In their own strength they perceived that they would fail and their own strength was all they had. They had

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Waiting—The Ultimate Test

not learned how to exhibit confidence in an almighty God. The rest of Israel gave way to the same fears.

Some have estimated that Israel consisted of nearly 3 million people at this time. Joshua and Caleb stood against the opinion of 3 million of their brothers and sisters. What arrogance, what pride for these two to believe that they were right when so many said that they were dead wrong. In fact, those who said they were wrong wished them to be dead. It is said that they spoke of stoning them. I have been stoned with the rocks of accusation and insult. It hurts. Some of the bruises don't go away very quickly. Some are deep bruises.

Consider David when he was yet a youth. He is sent to the site of battle to carry food to his brothers and to bring back news of their welfare to his father. He finds all of the army of Israel hiding behind rocks as the champion of the Philistines comes out daily to challenge and taunt them. David hears that King Saul has offered a reward to any Israelite warrior who will challenge Goliath and slay him. He even has offered one of his daughters as part of the reward. David hears of this and is incredulous.

David is not intimidated. He hears the taunt of Goliath and is filled with indignation. "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine who defies the armies of the LIVING GOD?" David cannot believe that such a reward has been offered to kill him. This idolater has defied the true God. His protection has been removed. He will become a prey to a warrior of the true and living God.

David's oldest brother Eliab overhears David as he talks to the soldiers about the reward offered to kill Goliath. David's words are bold and Eliab becomes angry. Eliab felt justified to hide

behind the rocks every day. Goliath is huge. David's fearless words sting and Eliab begins to accuse David of evil.

1 Samuel 17:28

Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle."

After all, who did David think he was. The entire army of Israel was cowed before Goliath. David was surely just exhibiting arrogance and pride. He was deluded to think that he could slay Goliath. He was but a youth. The opinion of all Israel was against him. Why did he think he was right?

No, being in the minority doesn't mean you are in the right, but being in the majority doesn't either. One must look at the issues involved. One must see what emotions and physical and spiritual forces are shaping opinion. Fear and a desire for self-preservation were very evident in the majority in both cases mentioned. Courage and confidence in God was present in the minority.

What do you suppose the percentages are today? Do the majority of Christians express confidence in God? Are they stepping courageously out in faith, entrusting themselves to an almighty and loving God? No, most are rather choosing to play it safe. They are given to pursuing the "prudent" path. What then do you suppose their response will be to a brother or sister who wants to face the giant?

It is hard, however, to face such opposition

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from brothers and sisters and family over a prolonged period of time. It wears at one. It is easy to give into despair when you have taken a stand that requires courage and confidence and then God delays in bringing about your vindication. Even Abraham had difficulty in waiting. At times it seems that desperation assails you. It is best not to make decisions in these moments. Stand firm. Wait. The answer is coming.

Isaiah 40:31

Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, give me the strength to endure the test. Give me the fortitude to finish the race. Though I stumble, give me the courage and resolve to get up again and return to the race. Consider my frame, that I am but dust. However, I desire to be courageous dust. I desire to be bold dust. I desire to be dust that brings glory to You. Breathe Your breath upon me and cause me to stand. Cause your resurrection life to renew me and bring forth fresh vitality. My eyes are upon You, Father. You are my shield and my buckler. You are my strong tower and my fortress. Cover me over with the pinions of your wings. Hide me from the power of the evil one. Do not let my enemies triumph over me. My eyes are on You. My eyes are on You. Lift up my head once more and set my feet upon the solid Rock.

Amen

The Untimeliness of God

Joseph Herrin (6-7-2000)

It has been prophesied by some in recent days that the Father is preparing a group of His children to be able to walk in tremendous callings in the days ahead. This group will be a type of firstfruits. It was common in the land of Judah and Israel for the people to plant an early crop of barley, only to plow it under when it began to reach maturity. This sacrificial crop enriched the soil, preparing the way for an even greater wheat harvest which would follow.

I believe the group God is raising up at this time corresponds to the barley crop. God will use them to prepare the way for a tremendous wheat harvest which will follow. As ministers of God, they will devote themselves to the Lord's purposes in them of ushering in the great last days harvest and in bringing forth beauty in the Bride of Christ.

Part of the preparation of this group is removing all religious thought and reasoning from them. These false thoughts born of man's reasoning and fleshly desire will be replaced with the true knowledge of God. One particular tenet of religious thought that the Father is revealing in my life, and I believe in the lives of many others, is that God's will can be recognized by timeliness and sufficiency of His provision. We are taught that if God's provision for us comes through for us in a timely manner, then it is proof of His will. If His provision carries past some immovable physical deadline, it is proof that He would have the need met in some other fashion.

My particular crucible of testing involves trusting God for financial resources. Nearly eight months ago God told me to leave my job as a PC

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Coordinator with a local hospital. He indicated at the time that He would take me into a new realm of ministry involving writing, speaking and whatever else He would bring to me. God confirmed this direction in my life many times over. It was a tremendous step of faith for me, so I asked Him to confirm His will many times. This He very graciously did. After a point, though, He quit reassuring me and left me to exercise faith in the path He had set before me.

During this time I have had no regular financial support. I am not a paid staff member of any church. Being 39 years old, I am much too young to collect retirement. To add to the trial, I am married and have two children, ages 10 and 12, who rely upon my provision for them. My wife does not work outside the home, rather she finds her employment in home schooling our children and fulfilling the other responsibilities of being a wife and a mother.

As I said, it was eight months ago that I left my job at the Father's leading, and during this time we have not lacked for food, clothing, transportation, shelter, or any other basic need of life. However, God's provision has not always been timely. On occasion my home mortgage and other bills have been in serious arrears before God's provision was manifested. At one point my mortgage payment was 3 months delinquent and I received a notice of pending foreclosure proceedings before God's provision was manifested.

The testimony of nearly one and all, both within the church and without, is that if God had truly led me to walk as I am, His provision would be both timely and amply sufficient. Indeed, many of the churches I have been in have taught that one of the primary ways to discern God's will in the life of the believer is to see if His provision is manifested in a timely and sufficient manner. Is this reli-

gious thinking, or does it reflect the true knowledge of God and His dealings with mankind?

It would certainly be nice if this were true. It would mean that those who are walking in obedience to God will never know lack, nor will they ever have to wait an undue amount of time to see God fulfill His word to them. Unfortunately, for those who wish this to be true, the Bible reveals that this is not the case.

One of the clearest examples in scripture is Abraham. God gave him a promise of a son. Abraham waited and waited. He knew at some point that he would pass a line of physical possibility. At some point his body would grow old and no longer be capable of reproduction. Abraham and Sarah waited as long as they could. The deadline was at hand. Sarah, being the dutiful wife, finally suggested that Abraham do something she really wished he would never have to do. Sarah was cutting her own throat. She was suggesting that her husband have a child by another woman. Physically, she could see no other way. Isn't God a timely God? Wouldn't He fulfill His promise to her husband while he was still capable of having children? This must be the only way.

Of course we know the story. Abraham listened to Sarah and had a child by her handmaiden. God then appeared to Abraham again and told him that this child was not the promised one. Whoops! If this wasn't the promised one, where would he arise from. Abraham was now past the point of having children, and so was Sarah.

Romans 4:19

And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb...

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God was very untimely (according to man's expectation) in fulfilling His promise to Abraham and Sarah. Something must have clicked in Abraham's thinking at this time. He realized he and Sarah were too old to have children, but God was still saying they would. God must not have been limited to perform His word within a time frame of physical possibility. It must have occurred to Abraham that God's word can be accomplished past what we would consider a point of no return.

This sort of messes up the nice religious theory that God's will can be recognized by its timeliness. The scriptures also show that God's will cannot be recognized by its sufficiency. Paul said:

Philippians 4:10-12

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

Paul said that he at times knew humble or lean times. He experienced going hungry and suffering need. Those who support the theory that provision indicates whether one is in God's will would have to conclude that Paul was outside of the will of God. "Why Paul, don't you know that if you were really doing what God called you to do that God's provision would be present in your life?"

Those who preach a prosperity gospel have

somehow overlooked much of the testimony of scripture. We don't like to wait upon God. We don't like to think that at some point we might endure lack or hunger. It is easier on our flesh to teach that God will always bless us with an on-time abundance of the things we need. By teaching this we are justified to go out and obtain what we need after our own fashion when we perceive that God hasn't met our need, or satisfied our longing, to the degree, or with the expedience we expected.

We may ask, "What could it hurt to try to help God out some if we perceive a real need and God's provision is absent?" The account of King Saul's failure to wait for God's provision should provide us reason to hesitate to "help God out." The story of King Saul's failure to wait upon God is familiar to most saints. I have heard it frequently taught on. I think most saints are much too hard on Saul. I know few who would not cave in to the same pressure.

Saul's son Jonathan had just gone and raided a Philistine garrison and had achieved a decent victory. This angered the Philistines. They called their whole army together. Their numbers were tremendous. "Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance... (I Samuel 13:5).

How many people did Saul have. We are told that there were 2,000 men with Saul and 1,000 with Jonathan. King Saul was vastly outnumbered. The people with him saw this and it is said that those following him "trembled." They were scared to death. Things then began to deteriorate. Saul's army began to slip off and disappear.

The Untimeliness of God

1 Samuel 13:6-7

When the men of Israel saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear.

Now, it is bad enough to be outnumbered and to have the numbers get worse and worse (it got to the point that Saul only had 600 men left, 4 out of 5 of his soldiers deserted), but to have the ones who remained “quaking with fear” made it even worse. Who was there to encourage and embolden Saul? Who was there to tell him to stand fast and trust in the Lord? Few of God’s saints today have ever been put in such dire straits.

Saul rightly knew that only God could deliver Israel in such a situation. It was customary to entreat the Lord’s favor before entering a battle. The king, however, was not to offer the burnt offering. It was pre-arranged that the prophet Samuel would show up and make the offering and entreat the Lord’s favor. Saul waited seven days, the days agreed upon for Samuel to arrive. When Samuel didn’t show up on time, Saul could endure the wait no longer.

It must be said that it was a tremendous test for Saul to wait even seven days. Each day he received reports of more Philistines gathering and more of his army fleeing. Saul was surrounded by terrified men. A seven day wait had to have been agonizing, but Saul waited these seven days. However, Saul had a point past which he could wait no longer. His endurance had limits to it.

1 Samuel 13:11-12

Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scat-

tering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering."

In actuality, Saul seems to have done the prudent thing. Certainly, he felt justified in his own eyes. Things started out bad and they were falling apart. In very little time Saul anticipated having no men left at all. The Philistines could come against him at any moment. In offering up the burnt offering he was seeking the Lord’s favor. There was only one thing wrong, Saul was not permitted to perform the sacrifice.

It is apparent here that in God’s sight, the end does not justify the means. Samuel told Saul,

1 Samuel 13:13-14

"You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command."

It is interesting to note that if Samuel had shown up at the appointed time that Saul would have appeared to be the most godly of men. He had faithfully waited seven days under the most trying conditions when all were deserting him. How many of us appear godly when God is on-time? How many of us look like heroes when God meets us according to our expectation? But what if God’s answer is delayed; what will be revealed to be in our heart? Will we also feel “compelled” to do that which we know in our heart is wrong? Selah.

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Prayer:

Father, give your servants the strength and confidence in you to wait upon your provision. Keep us from presumption. Father, protect us from the terror that comes upon us suddenly. May we not be moved, but may we find peace attending our way as we fix our eyes upon you.

Father, instruct us that we might acquire the same peace that Your Son had, sleeping in the bow of the boat while the storm raged and others' hearts were filled with fear. As the popular song of one of your handmaidens says, "You have been my Lord and Savior; won't you be my Prince of Peace."

Father, we ask for your peace that we might persevere in the storms and trials of life. Out of our confidence in You, may we be preserved in the day of testing.

Amen

As Sparks Fly Upward

Joseph Herrin (11-07-09)

Job 5:7

For man is born for trouble, as sparks fly upward.



My Campfire on Jekyll Island

The Internet is filled with somber declarations of impending judgment on America and the nations. New watch dates are forecast almost daily, and many fall to the ground while the prophets present various excuses to salvage their reputations.

Daily there is something ominous in the news

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concerning the economy, the banking crisis, America's pressure of Israel to divide up her land, the erosion of personal rights by an aggressive, sinister authoritarian government, the hyping of flu pandemics, etc.. I have not written much on these things of late, believing these things to be evident. The signs are everywhere of an approaching storm.

Some would like to know when the storm will hit with all its fury. The Spirit says, "Soon!" Some would like to know the specifics of the threats they face and what they can do to prepare. Yet there is something that is very critical to understand that very few ministers and bloggers are speaking about.

What is God's purpose in sending all of these troubles upon the earth?

Troubles are not new to mankind. One need only read the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, to observe that every age has had an abundance of troubles. Yet in this last hour, at the end of this present age, the earth is to experience troubles that will dwarf all that has come before.

Mark 13:19-20

"For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created, until now, and never shall. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect whom He chose, He shortened the days."

As the hour gets nearer for the sons of God to be revealed, mature sons who bear the unmistakable character, power and authority of the ascended Christ, the earth must experience

birth pangs. These birth pangs will grow more severe and more frequent just before the sons of God are revealed.

Romans 8:18-22

For I consider that ***the sufferings of this present time*** are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for ***the revealing of the sons of God***. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that ***the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now***.

Paul declares that the sufferings manifested in the creation are birth pangs. Nowhere is this suffering more acute than among mankind, especially those who are experiencing the formation of Christ within themselves. There is no other method by which Christ might be formed and manifested among the creation than to subject it to suffering. Immediately after the fall of man in the garden, Yahweh declared this to be so in the form of a parable that is experienced daily around the world by tens of thousands of women.

Genesis 3:16

To the woman [God] said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you shall bring forth children..."

Why did Yahweh choose to inflict this specific judgment upon the woman? It was not simply to punish. It was not because Yahweh enjoys inflicting pain upon His creation, nor because

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He was wrathful concerning the transgression of Eve. It was to reveal a very profound truth. The physical realm would serve as a parable of the spiritual realm.

There is no other means by which God might perfect sons, bringing forth offspring in His image and likeness, than by subjecting the creation to painful experiences.

Hebrews 5:7-8

[Yahshua], in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and having been heard in respect to that which he feared, through being a Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

(Note: Young's Literal Translation is much closer to expressing accurately this passage, though the phrasing is a bit awkward. Many popular translations make this passage appear to state that it was somehow an exception for Christ, while being a son, to have to be perfected through suffering. The more accurate understanding is that all sons must be perfected through this means. Christ's experiences serve as a pattern for all who would be conformed to the image of God the Father.)

Returning to the parable of the curse spoken to Eve, we find that this first woman stands as a symbol of the Creation, of Israel, and of the Church. The creation is groaning in anticipation of the sons of God being revealed, in the same way that a woman groans in childbirth. The people of God have been especially singled out to be the portion of the creation out of which this man-child will arise. To be most specific, the Bride of Christ, that remnant por-

tion of the body of Christ (Eve was formed of a remnant of Adam's body, serving as a type) must experience birth pangs that sons in the image of Christ might be manifested to the world.

These pains while being experienced are a great grief, yet they are forgotten when a son is revealed.

John 16:20-21

"Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy. Whenever a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for joy that a man has been born into the world."

Do you see the spiritual parable in Christ's words? The suffering of the church, of those who are true disciples of Christ - following in His footsteps, is compared to a woman experiencing birth pangs. Christ declares that her anguish is forgotten when she sees what she has given birth to - a man child. Christ is signifying with these words that the suffering of the church is for the purpose of bringing forth mature sons in His image and likeness. There is no other means by which sons might be formed and revealed to the world.

Christ is our pattern man. He walked the path that was required of all sons if they are to be perfected (matured). We must follow in His footsteps if we are to also be manifested as sons of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of

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witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Yahshua, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Christ endured the cross, the universal symbol of suffering, for the joy set before Him. A woman experiences the pains of childbirth for the joy set before her. We too will embrace momentary, light afflictions by setting our eyes on the joy before us.

II Corinthians 4:17-18

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen...

We cannot arrive at the glory to come except by passing through these present afflictions. There is no other path offered to being seated with Christ on His throne.

I Peter 4:12-13

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation...

A day will come when these sufferings will be behind us. The first things that all must pass through will give way to those things to come.

John received a revelation of that day, and recorded the following:

Revelation 21:3-4

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and ***He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; THE FIRST THINGS have passed away.***"

Before a woman holds a son in her arms, she must experience pain. Before we are revealed as mature sons of God we must also pass through the first things.

So many Christians in this hour have adopted a false mindset. Satan has deceived them, appealing to the passions and desires of the flesh, and its great aversion to suffering. He has persuaded them to adopt a view that they are to experience uninterrupted blessings at this time. Poverty, hunger, sickness, trials, suffering, reproaches, slanders, persecution, etc., are viewed as enemies to be assiduously avoided.

There are times when God would deliver men and women from such things, for the enemy of our souls seeks to make our way excessively difficult. Yet, there is appointed for EVERY son and daughter of God a cup of suffering from which they must drink. When we are presented with THIS CUP, we must respond as did the firstborn Son of God.

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Luke 22:42-43

"Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Your will be done."



When the Father reveals that we must drink from a cup of suffering, we must not refuse it. It is intended for our perfecting as sons.

“Man is born for trouble as sparks fly upward.”

Why do you suppose the Scriptures use this specific analogy? Our ascent upwards is both a fiery path and a path of great trouble. We are all BORN for such things. We are destined to sit with Christ upon His throne, and the pathway to the throne is ever the same.

Let us hold fast to the will of God for our lives, not shrinking back from those experiences of suffering that our Father reveals to be for our perfecting as sons. He will surely walk with us through the fire. We will not suffer any loss. As the three men cast into the fiery furnace, the only thing that was consumed was the cords that bound them.

Daniel 3:24-25

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he responded and said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast **bound** into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "Certainly, O king." He answered and said, "Look! I see four men **loosed** and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm..."

When we embrace those fiery trials before us, not only are we set free, but we will find that the Son of God has never been as close to us as He is when we willingly become partakers of His suffering. Though you may be cast alone into the fire, there will be two who walk there.

Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Yahshua our Lord.

In the fire we walk with Christ. In the fire we are set free. Hallelujah!

A Spectacle Before Spectators

A Spectacle Before Spectators

Joseph Herrin (1-25-2001)

This article is written for those precious saints of God who have been in trials and fiery furnaces and wilderness places for some time now. I have noted a peculiar thing about some of these people, as I have noted it in my own experience. God has placed many in trials that have drawn a lot of criticism from others. At a time when it would seem that the children of God could use an encouraging word the most, they have received judgment, criticism, and scorn. People have wagged their heads and their tongues as they consider your life and trials.

A large part of what has precipitated this response is that God has required His children, who would hear His voice and respond to it, to do things that don't make sense in the natural world. God has called some to quit perfectly good jobs and to trust Him for their financial provision. God has placed in their hearts an understanding that they are in a time of transition and He has a new calling for them. But they must first go through a time of cleansing, molding and preparation that only responding to such an illogical request could bring upon them. (I say it is illogical from a worldly perspective, for from a spiritual vantage point there is great precedence and purpose in it.)

Such saints must contend not only with personal doubts and fears about taking such a step, but they are subjected to all the wisdom of the world and of a carnal church that knows next to nothing about hearing God's voice and responding in obedience; responding regardless of what is in the cup God would have them to drink from. God has required some of His children to trust Him for physical healing in some matter, either in their own life or in the life of another. I am speaking here of those who have received a clear word from God on a matter,

not those who have been indoctrinated with doctrines and principles of healing who are attempting to step out and apply things they have learned from men. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word (rhema - spoken word) of God. I am speaking here of those who know they have received a word from God to trust Him and wait upon Him in some matter of healing.

As many of these have waited upon God they have experienced setbacks and discouragements as they have waited and waited and have not yet seen God's promised deliverance and healing. The voice of the world tells them they are fools to expect God to heal them. The world says, "God has given us the medical profession in these modern days. This is the way in which God will heal. You are a fool to not lean upon the arm of man, trusting instead to the unseen arm of God." As you have tarried, waiting, you have endured much criticism and the judgments of those who feel you are deluded. Why? Why would God subject you to this?

For some of you God has given a promise of a restored relationship. It may be a spouse or a child or some other relation. Some have children who have become rebellious and have embraced the wickedness of the world, yet God has spoken to you that He has some great purpose for this one. Against all appearances you have been holding to that which God has revealed to you. Though the child continues to act shamefully and shows little fear of God in their life, you hold onto the promise and continue to remind the child of this promise as well.

There are many other things that God is using for the personal crucible of refining and testing of His children in this hour. As a firstfruits company many are fulfilling the words recorded in Daniel.

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Daniel 12:9-10

9 And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time.

10 "Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.

(NAS)

Many are being purged, purified, and refined in this hour and, as prophesied, none of the wicked understand. Those who are undergoing this purifying process appear as a spectacle to those who are not being purified, those who are unwilling to submit to the process, and those who have no knowledge of God.

As I have watched this I have had a thought gnawing at the back of my mind. "God, why would You ask me, or my brothers and sisters who love You so dearly, to go through a trial that the world and the apostate church does not understand? In what way are You glorified in this trial? Certainly it does not seem that You are glorified before men, for all men are condemning and criticizing and misunderstanding Your remnant in this hour."

I have been reminded by well meaning saints that our lives are to glorify God and to be a light and a testimony before men. They observe the trials that I have endured and they ask, "In what way is God being glorified? In what way is your life a light before man? If people are criticizing and scorning your walk then are you not rather turning men away from God?" These are questions that bear answering.

As I have spent time before the Father with these questions one of the things I received from God was an assurance that the applause of the world does not equate with glory being given to God. God is not glorified when all men speak well of us. The words of Jesus came clearly to me.

Luke 6:26

"Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.

(NAS)

One might well ask, "If they spoke well of the false prophets, how did they speak of the true prophets?" It doesn't take much investigation to find out. They were mocked, scorned, ridiculed, judged as being of the devil, put out of the congregation, and even mistreated and many were killed.

Luke 11:47-51

47 "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them.

48 "Consequently, you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs.

49 "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute,

50 in order that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,

A Spectacle Before Spectators

51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'

(NAS)

Jesus clearly states here that He will send prophets and apostles to the world, and to those who represent the religious system of the day, and some will be killed and some will be persecuted. The question I have been asked could be asked of them, "How is God glorified if all men are scorning you and judging you to be evil? How are you being a light to the world?"

Before I answer this question I would like to mention that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was also judged as a transgressor and hung between two thieves. To the religious leaders of the day His offenses were more serious than that of the thieves He was crucified between. They accused Him of one of the greatest of offenses, being a blasphemer against God. They used the word of God to condemn Him and to sentence Him to death. Is not the word being used against many of those today who are seeking to walk faithfully with God, even at great personal cost and loss?

But the question remains, "How is God glorified in all of this if men are reviling, not praising, those who are following Him?" You may have asked the same question. Consider Job. He suffered tremendous things and to his closest friends, who claimed a considerable knowledge of God and his ways, it appeared that Job must certainly be a great sinner to experience all that came against him. They tried to convince Job of his transgression. How was God glorified if those men who observed him did not applaud him, but rather condemned him?

The answer begins to become obvious when we think of Job for we know that there were others observing Job besides mankind. We know that Job was being observed by all of heaven. Both the holy angels and the enemies of God in the heavens were considering Job's life, his behavior, his words, and his faith.

As I look at the scriptures I see that Job was not an exception. Job was not the only person who had a heavenly audience observing his life. Indeed, all of God's children are under observation at all times by both the holy angels and the fallen. There is beyond the angels a great cloud of witnesses that are intent upon the lives of God's saints. I would like to look at some of the scriptures that reveal this observation.

I have long been intrigued by the life of David, this man with a heart after God. One particular comment in the story of his life caused me to pause and consider what was being revealed. It was a comment that was made during the period of David's greatest failure when he committed adultery and murder. Nathan the prophet was sent to confront David with his sin and the following is revealed.

II Samuel 12:13-14

13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.

14 "However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die."

Did you catch the comment? Nathan said, "by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the

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LORD to blaspheme.” What enemies? Who knew about David’s sin? It is certain that David did not broadcast what he did. Only he, Bathsheba, and Joab knew what he had done. It is fairly certain that neither Bathsheba nor Joab would blab about what had transpired. To David it seemed that his sin was hidden. No one knew about it.

The enemies of God here could not refer to Israel’s natural enemies, the nations that dwelt around them, for they had no way to know of David’s sin. Who did know? Satan knew. Those who followed Satan in rebellion knew. The holy angels also knew.

I believe I have rightly concluded that the enemies of the LORD spoken of by Nathan were those in the spiritual realm. Satan and the angels that rebelled against God were those referred to. In the book of Job we are given this picture.

Job 1:6-10

6 Now there was a day when the servants of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

7 And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

8 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."

9 Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"

10 "Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

A number of things are revealed in this passage. Those in the heavens are attentive to the lives of men. Both the friends and the enemies of God are observing the lives of men. When God asked Satan about Job it was clear that Satan knew Job very well and was aware of the details of his life. It is also interesting to note that men are the subject of discussion between God and the angels, including the fallen angels that are counted as God’s enemies.

Certainly David, like Job, was closely observed by all of heaven. Satan and his followers knew what was going on in David’s life. The sin that David thought was hidden was not hidden from their eyes. This gave them occasion to come before God and to blaspheme. I can imagine some of their accusations.

“You call Yourself a righteous and holy God. How is it then that the man You have anointed as king, the man You have blessed and prospered, how is it that he has both committed adultery with the wife of one of his most faithful servants and then he has murdered this same servant to hide his sin? How is it that he goes unpunished if You are so righteous and holy? Is this an example of a man whom You testify has a heart after You? Will you now reward him in his wickedness? Will You withhold judgment from him? Is this man truly among the most faithful of Your servants? Do his actions represent Your will?”

In this manner the enemies of God were given an occasion to blaspheme due to the sin of David.

A Spectacle Before Spectators

What I want to point out in this example, is that the lives of the saints of God are always being observed by those in the heavens. Consider the words of Paul.

I Corinthians 4:9

For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

(NAS)

Paul speaks of the apostles as being a spectacle and he even lists the angels before he mentions men. A spectacle is something observed, something watched, inspected, and scrutinized. In the same way our lives are on display in the heavenlies. This truth is revealed in the following scripture.

I Corinthians 11:10

Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

(NAS)

In this scripture where Paul is teaching on authority and the symbolic use of a headcovering, he states that the reason for a woman wearing a headcovering is for the angels. What? You mean that wearing a headcovering is not for the observation of mankind? This is a marvelous thing. In this scripture there is no denying that we are on display to the heavens. We are even told to do particular things as a testimony and a sign to those heavenly beings that are observing our lives.

Satan's original sin was rebellion. He uncovered his head before God. He wanted to be equal with

God and not subject to God. For his rebellion he was judged and cast out of heaven. The woman by wearing a covering on her head does so as a sign to the angels. To the angels she is testifying, "I am content with the position God has given me in creation. I seek to neither rise above my position, nor to fall below it. I willingly accept and embrace the authorities placed above me and I will remain submitted in the place God has called me to."

To the fallen angels this is a rebuke and to the holy angels this is the greatest of testimonies. What an awesome revelation. Our lives are always being observed. Our actions, words, and faith are on display in the heavens. This is further revealed in the following verse.

Hebrews 13:2

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

(NAS)

Returning to my original purpose in this article it should be apparent that there is a realm that we rarely consider that is very real indeed. There are observers to our lives beyond those we see with our physical eyes. How does God receive glory from our lives when men speak ill of us and do not understand our walk? The answer should be more evident now. If our disobedience can give an occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme, then our obedience is occasion for great glory being given to God. When heaven observes mankind, weak as we are, pressing on in obedience to God through trials, tribulations, distresses, uncertainties, fears, and every sort of hindrance, God is greatly glorified. The mouths of God's enemies are stopped and there is great joy among those who are the friends of God. Peter gives us the following revelation.

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I Peter 2:19-20

19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly...

20 But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

(NAS)

Our lives are being observed by God and by the hosts of heaven. God is honored and we gain favor before Him when we press on faithfully despite persecutions, distresses, fears, and the false judgments of others.

If you have wondered how what you are enduring can bring glory to God, then wonder no longer. The applause or rejection we receive from man does not indicate whether God is glorified. There is an unseen realm where things are being weighed and judged and where we are constantly observed. Our every victory and every failing is seen. Every tear and every moment of rejoicing is remembered. No, what you are walking in may not be understood by those around you, but there are unseen observers and they do understand. The holy hosts of God are rooting for the saints of God. Keep on! Don't give up now! Your vindication is coming!

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Charles Haddon Spurgeon - Bible Devotion

"Your refuge from the avenger of blood."

— [Joshua 20:3](#)

It is said that in the land of Canaan, cities of refuge were so arranged, that any man might reach one of them within half a day at the utmost. Even so the word of our salvation is near to us; Jesus is a present Saviour, and the way to Him is short; it is but a simple renunciation of our own merit, and a laying hold of Jesus, to be our all in all. With regard to the roads to the city of refuge, we are told that they were strictly preserved, every river was bridged, and every obstruction removed, so that the man who fled might find an easy passage to the city. Once a year the elders

went along the roads and saw to their order, so that nothing might impede the flight of any one, and cause him, through delay, to be overtaken and slain. How graciously do the promises of the gospel remove stumbling blocks from the way! Wherever there were by-roads and turnings, there were fixed up hand-posts, with the inscription upon them—"To the city of refuge!" This is a picture of the road to Christ Jesus. It is no roundabout road of the law; it is no obeying this, that, and the other; it is a straight road: "Believe, and live." It is a road so hard, that no self-righteous man can ever tread it, but so easy, that every sinner, who knows himself to be a sinner may by it

find his way to heaven. No sooner did the man-slayer reach the outworks of the city than he was safe; it was not necessary for him to pass far within the walls, but the suburbs themselves were sufficient protection. Learn hence, that if you do but touch the hem of Christ's garment, you shall be made whole; if you do but lay hold upon him with "faith as a grain of mustard seed," you are safe.

"A little genuine grace ensures the death of all our sins." Only waste no time, loiter not by the way, for the avenger of blood is swift of foot; and it may be he is at your heels at this still hour of eventide.