

PERSECUTION

by

Milton Martin

THE CHURCH FUNCTIONING

Matthew 16:18

I. Christ Founded His Church and Commissioned Her to Carry On His Work. Matt. 16:18; 28:18-20.

- A. Traditional churches put emphasis on buildings, professionally-trained pastors, maintaining status, high-profile image, etc.
- B. Are we prepared to express our faith and worship in other manners and forms?
- C. The first Churches did not have Temples or buildings.
- D. When our buildings are closed, will this mean the end of our Christianity?

II. The First Church Was Persecuted Severely! How Did They Respond?

- A. They met quietly in private homes. Acts. 5:42.
- B. "Lay Christians" faithfully shared their testimony. Acts 8:1,4.
- C. They took advantage of every opportunity to witness and testify. Acts 16:12,13.
- D. They taught informally (personal discipleship). Acts 11:25,26.
- E. They fellowshiped together while ministering. Acts 2:46,47.
- F. They worshipped under every circumstance and opportunity. Acts 16:23-25.

III. Alternative Means of Worship, Fellowship and Witness Were Observed.

- A. House churches were the norm. Rom. 16:3-5; I Cor. 16:19.
- B. Persecuted Christians and "Unregistered" churches use birthdays, weddings and funerals as opportunities to meet as a body.
- C. Can you suggest some forms and ways?

IV. Some Means That Satan Uses to Defeat Christians and Churches During Persecution.

- A. Satan uses isolation as a tool against churches.
- B. Satan uses guilt and offenses as a weapon against churches.
 - 1. The Devil is the "accuser of the brethren."
 - 2. The accusations of Satan are continuous and never ending.
 - 3. The evil one watchfully waits to pounce when sin has not been confessed.
 - 4. Much care has to be taken to continually maintain communion and fellowship with the Lord. I John 1:9.
 - 5. Personal offences not confronted become very serious and can grow into "mountainous" problems.
 - 6. Satan does his best to cause Christians to carry "false guilt" after sin has been forgiven. Rom. 5:1,2; 8:33,34.
 - 7. Instead of doubting and asking "why," say, "Lord, what would you have me to do?"

CHRISTIANS WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION

I Peter 4:12-19

I. Promise of Suffering. I Pet. 2:21; 4:12; I Thess. 3:3,4; Acts 14:22; II Tim. 3:12.

II. Purpose of Suffering. I Peter 4:12; “Fiery trial.” Job 23:10; Ps. 66:10.

- A. Proof of our faith.
- B. When something is professed, it is necessary to prove it’s reality.
- C. Proof of the depth of our faith.
 - 1. What will it take to move us or cause us to turn aside?
 - 2. The importance or size of that which hinders reveals the strength of our faith.

III. Participation With Christ In His Sufferings. I Pet. 4:13.

Literally the Christian enters into the sufferings of Christ. It will not be the cross but it may be at the hands of men.

- A. The Lord was denied. John 1:10.
- B. The Lord was hated. John 15:24.
- C. The Lord left the house of His Father. John 3:16.
- D. The Lord did not have a house of His own.
- E. The Lord did not have the money even to pay His taxes. Matt 17:27.
- F. The Lord did not have a bed.
- G. The Lord had no one to defend Him when He was falsely accused.
- H. The Lord had no tomb.
- I. The Lord became poor.

Phil. 3:10; I Pet. 4:1; Gal. 2:20; 6:12,17; Acts 5:41; Heb. 12:2; I Thess. 2:2; I Pet. 2:21.

What will be our reaction? Heb. 12:2.

IV. Power In Suffering or Through Suffering. I Peter 4:14

The Holy Spirit rests upon those who suffer. In the Old Testament a cloud was a symbol of the presence of God. This cloud was known as the glory of the Lord. I Kings 8:10,11. A similar glory comes on a believer by the Holy Spirit when he suffers for Christ. The Spirit comes to minister - to fill, to cover, to clothe, to enclose, to sustain, to help, to strengthen, to intercede, and to make up that which is lacking. Acts 6:5-8; 7:55,60. (This glory was seen in Stephen). II Cor. 12:9,10. (The darker the night, the brighter the stars).

V. Dangers In Suffering. I Peter 4:14-16

- A. There is a difference in suffering for Christ and suffering for one’s own guilt or foolishness.
- B. Shame. Heb. 2:11; 11:16.
- C. Bitterness instead of joy and thanksgiving. Ex. 15:23,24; 16:2; I Thess. 5:18.

VI. Purification Through Suffering. I Peter 4:17,18.

- A. Suffering can be used to purify, purge, burn up “dross,” cause us to judge ourselves or cause us to deal with sin. Ezra 9:6.
- B. Before a church can truly reach out or enter into true ministry, it must be purified, pruned and refined. John 15:2
- C. There is no power without purification.
 - 1. Suffering in itself cannot refine or purify.
 - 2. Only the Grace of God can produce refining and purification, but suffering can cause us to recognize our need.
 - a. Suffering can help us understand that nothing can be done in our strength.
 - b. Suffering can make us sensitive to sin.
- D. Through suffering we can learn to completely depend upon the Lord. II Cor. 12:9,10.
- E. How will we respond? I Peter 4:19; Acts 7:59; Luke 23:46.

THE PART OF SUFFERING IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER

Suffering is common to every person. Job 5:6,7. It is normal for a Christian to suffer as well. II Tim. 3:12; Acts 14:22; I Pet. 2:21.

There are levels of persecution: pressure, humiliation, discrimination, threats, loss of material possessions or physical violence.

I. Common Misconceptions.

- A. Suffering is punishment for some wrong or sin. I Peter 4:19; 3:14; 4:16.
- B. Thinking that one should never be sad. I Pet. 1:6.
- C. Thinking that only Christians suffer. Gen. 3:16-19.
- D. Unhealthy enchantment with suffering.
- E. Unreasonable fear of suffering.

II. What The Bible Teaches About Suffering.

- A. Christians are to expect suffering. John 15:18-21; I John 3:13; John 17:14.
- B. Suffering can be the will of God for us. I Pet. 4:16; 2:21.
- C. Suffering in the life of the child of God has a purpose. I Pet. 1:6,7; II Cor. 12:7-10.
- D. We should suffer for righteousness sake. Matt. 5:10; I Pet. 4:15.
- E. God blesses right suffering. Matt. 5:10-12; Luke 6:22,23.
- F. Suffering causes us to look to heaven. Rom. 8:16-18; Col. 3:1-3.
- G. We should not be ashamed or embarrassed about suffering. I Pet. 4:16; Heb. 13:12,13.
- H. We must follow the example of Christ. I Pet. 2:19-25.
- I. We must react under suffering as the Lord did. Matt. 5:38-48; Rom. 12:14,17-21; I Pet. 2:21-23.
- J. We can have the victory. John 16:33.

III. Prepare For Suffering.

- A. Understand it to be normal. I Pet. 4:12; Phil. 1:29.
- B. Know the teaching of the Word of God. Phil 3:10; Rom. 6:3-5; John 8:31,32.
- C. Abide in Christ. John 15:4.
- D. Submit daily to the Holy Spirit. Eph. 5:18; 4:30.
- E. Rest in the will of God. Eph. 5:17; Heb. 4:1,9-11; 12:15.
- F. Edify your brethren when you and they are suffering. Col. 3:16,17; Eph. 5:19-21.

WAYS ATTACK MAY COME TO CHURCHES

I. The Focus Of Persecution. John 15:18-21; Col. 1:27b.

The attack has been and always will be against our Lord.

II. The Language Of The Overcomer.

- A. The rallying words of a conqueror - "overcome". Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21.
- B. The secret of overcoming. Rev. 12:11.
 - 1. "By the blood of the Lamb." Rev. 12:11a.
(Note study on importance of the blood.)
 - a. Peace with God
 - b. Peace with our conscience.
 - c. Power in the life.
 - d. This weapon is lost:
 - (1.) By liberal theology - no blood.
 - (2.) By liberation theology - no cross.
 - (3.) By burdenless preaching - no power.
 - 2. "By the word of their testimony." Rev. 12:11b.
 - a. Satan attempts to rob us of the victory by causing us to not open our mouth or causing us to lose our testimony and credibility.
 - b. There is the "internal enemy" also.
 - (1.) Division within congregations.
 - (2.) Fear.
 - (3.) Unbelief.
 - (4.) Lack of love.
 - (5.) Sidetracked on issues, etc., rather than focusing on people and souls.
 - c. Lack of care of our families.
 - d. Plans and projects that are not the will of God.
 - e. Anything that would put our life out of balance.
 - 3. "They loved not their lives unto the death." Rev. 12:11c.
 - a. Compromise is not in the vocabulary.
 - b. Examples of Christians who have suffered.
 - c. Not only the physical life is involved.
 - (1.) It may be necessary to die to ambitions, position, and rights.
 - (2.) Self-judgement is necessary. I Peter 4:17,18.

III. The Order Of Persecution.

Persecution is not some kind of a blanket or exact, detailed thing in every country, be it communistic, religious or some other totalitarian government. There are some general signs however when persecution may be about to begin.

- A. Limitations in evangelism.
 - 1. Christians are not given permission to travel or choose their employment.
 - 2. All Christian programs are eliminated from radio and TV.
 - 3. Any religious meetings outside of church buildings are prohibited.

4. Permission must be secured for the times of worship. No meeting together except at those specified times.
5. Government infiltrators or spies are present in all services.
- B. The importation of Bibles and Christian literature is prohibited.
 1. Such printed material is considered non-essential.
 2. There are situations where the Bible was placed in the same category as pornographic material.
- C. Foreign missionaries are expelled from the country.
 1. By laws limiting clergy to local nationals.
 2. By laws prohibiting foreigners to work in the country. In others, one can only be a tourist with limited stay or travel only in certain specified areas.
 3. By direct threats and violence against foreigners.
- D. Christian leaders are threatened and severely discriminated against.
 1. Mail is censored and pastors are limited in the subjects they can preach.
 - a. Tax exempt status will be taken from the churches if anything political is even mentioned from the pulpits.
 - b. Pastors are kept "in line" by threats of the seizing of their children by the government.
 2. Pastors are not allowed to devote all their time to the ministry.
 - a. "They must become productive members of the society."
 - b. This means that they must become bi-vocational.
 - c. They may be assigned to such jobs that take all their strength and time.
 3. Pastors are not allowed to visit their members or to distribute gospel literature
 4. Churches are not allowed to have typewriters, computers or printing equipment.
 5. Pastors may be manipulated by scare tactics.
 - a. They may be summoned for questioning.
 - b. They may be forced to attend certain government "indoctrination" classes.
 - c. Special "tempting" offers may be made to them as coercion or seduction.
 - (1.) This may be in the form of special privileges.
 - (2.) It may be in the form of admission of their children into college or to other vocations rather than those to which Christians are limited.
 - d. They may be harassed by middle of the night house searches.
 - e. Their services may be invaded by a number of government "goons".
 6. Pastors may be assigned to work in some remote and distant place in the country.
 - a. The purpose is to isolate them from their people and other Christians.
 - b. They may be given very demeaning and humiliating jobs.
 7. Pastors are arrested and "re-educated".
 - a. This can include torture.
 - b. They may be put to open shame.
 - c. False accusation and untrue testimony given against them.
- E. Churches are forced to register.
 1. All church leaders must be approved by the state.
 2. All sermons must be written out and reviewed by certain individuals or departments before they can be delivered.
 3. Statements must be signed before they are allowed to preach.
 - a. Example: That they will not mention the government in their sermons.
 - b. Example: No attempt will be made to evangelized the unsaved.
- F. Denominations are forced to unite.

1. The number of denominations is limited.
 2. All come under the control of a national ecumenical council.
 3. A totally national church is “created”.
- G. Educational and vocational opportunities for Christians are limited.
1. Only members of certain youth groups are allowed to attend university.
 2. No Christian can be a doctor, lawyer, professor or social worker.
 3. Christians have no choice in their vocation or employment.
- H. Religious education of all under 18 is prohibited.
1. No home schooling is allowed.
 2. Christian young people are forced to attend “special education” classes on atheism, evolution, sex education and “alternate lifestyles”.
 3. Parents that violate the law are subject to the loss of their children.
- I. Christians are prohibited from giving aid to each other.
1. When one member of a family is arrested, the family loses certain “rights” or “privileges”.
 - a. This may include the right to medical care, housing or food.
 - b. He family is isolated by not being allowed to fraternize with fellow believers or even other extended family members.
- J. Churches are closed.
1. Buildings are converted to other uses.
 2. Christians are “assigned” to remote or other areas so as to isolate them.
 3. Christians are forbidden to have contact with other believers.

IV. Many Christians Firmly Believe That It Will Never Happen To Them.

- A. For some reason they believe themselves exempt.
- B. The rapture of believers is certain but we have no right to believe that God will excuse us from persecution.

V. Present Lessons For Believers.

- A. Pray as never before for our nation and its leaders. I Tim. 2:1-4; Rom. 13:1-7.
- B. Determine to be a conqueror. Rev. 12:11.

GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES

WHY ARE THEY SO?

I. Because Of Their Source.

- A. Precious because it is God that makes them.
 - 1. There is no variation in God. James 1:17.
 - 2. God cannot lie. Titus 1:2.
 - 3. God's Word is sure. I Pet. 1:23-25; Matt. 24:35; Num. 23:19; I Kings 8:56; Matt. 5:18.
 - 4. All the attributes of God depend on the fulfillment and completion of His Word and His promises.

II. Because Of Their Superiority.

God's promises are not only great but are exceedingly great. God's perfection is reflected in all that He does. God is perfect and complete and consequently, so are all His promises.

- A. God not only promises life but eternal, abundant life. John 10:10.
- B. God not only promises redemption but eternal redemption. Heb. 9:12.
- C. God not only promises joy but fullness of joy. John 15:11; I Pet. 1:8.
- D. God not only promises peace but perfect peace - peace that passes all understanding. Isaiah 26:3; Phil. 4:7.
- E. God not only promises pardon but promises to remember our sins no more. Jer. 31:34.
- F. God not only promises heaven but heaven with Him. John 14:1-3; I Thess. 4:17.
- G. God not only promises grace but sufficient grace. II Cor. 12:9.

III. Because Of Their Sufficiency.

The promises of God cover every possibility that could be presented in the Christian life

What is your need?

- A. Food - Ps. 34:10
- B. Clothing - Matt. 6:25, 30-32.
- C. Temporal necessities - Matt. 6:33.
- D. Guidance - Ps. 73:24; Isaiah 30:21.
- E. Wisdom - Prov. 16:3; James 1:5.
- F. Rest - Matt. 11:28; John 6:37.
- G. Pardon and Forgiveness - Isaiah 55:7; Acts 13:38.
- H. Salvation - Rom. 10:9,13.
- I. Security - John 10:27-29.
- J. Anxiety in old age - Isaiah 46:4.
- K. Lack of sleep - Prov. 3:24.
- L. Freedom from worry - Ps. 50:15; 55:22.
(And do not forget - Matt. 7:11; Ezra 8:22; Ps. 145:18.)

IV. Because Of Their Simplicity.

God's promises are great and precious because they are simple and literal.

- A. Easy to find. "The way of life is so covered with the promises of God that it is impossible to take one step without finding one of them." John Bunyan.
- B. Easy to understand. Isaiah 35:8.
- C. Easy to appropriate. There is grace for those who recognize their need and cry out to the Lord. II Cor. 9:8; Mark 9:24; John 11:40.
- D. Easy to prove. Matt. 7:7-11. Have you ever proven the Lord.
- E. Easy to learn and remember. Matt. 11:28-30; I John 5:3.

Are you appropriating the promises of God?

THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF OUR BATTLE

Eph. 6:12; II Cor. 10:3,4

The victory is ours through Christ. Rom. 8:32,37; I Cor. 15:57. It is true that there will be many battles, apparent defeats, set-backs, closed doors, spiritual failure and yes, deaths. Get the whole picture. Do not be taken up too much with individual or isolated events.

I. God Is Still Sovereign And In Control. Isaiah 40:15; Dan. 2:20-22; 4:35; Job 12:14-23; Ps. 75:6,7; Jerm. 27:5; Prov. 1:24-31; Ps. 76:10; 62:11; Heb. 13:8.

II. God Has Never Ever Failed In His Promises. II Cor. 1:20; II Pet. 1:4.

There are over seven thousand promises in the Bible - one for ever need of the believer. Joshua 21:45; 23:14; I Kings 8:56; Heb. 6:13-18; Acts 7:5; II Pet. 3:9. Related promises. Heb. 2:3; Isaiah 30:18; Ps. 34:8; Prov. 16:20; Jerm. 17:7,8.

III. Victory Is Assured Because Of The Lord's Mandates.

With each commandment that the Lord gives, He gives sufficient grace to fulfill or carry it out to completion. II Cor. 9:8; Eph. 3:20; II Cor. 12:9.

To the obedient church, the Lord has promised:

- A. His power - Authority - Matt. 28:18.
- B. His presence - Matt. 28:20.
- C. His provision - Phil. 4:13-19.

IV. Victory Is Also Based In The Lord's Coming. II Thess. 2:8

In Glory with His own. Rev. 1:5-8; 19:11-16; Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:19-22; Matt. 16:18; Isaiah 11:3-5; Job 4:3-9; Ps. 91:14-16.

It Is True! Do You Believe?

SOME POSSIBLE FORMS THAT PERSECUTION MAY TAKE

I Peter 2:19-24

Suffering is a part of the life of every true believer. There are at least 33 possible ways that one may suffer.

1. For righteousness' sake. Matt. 5:10; I Pet. 3:14.
2. By slander (evil report) Jer. 20:10; Ps. 31:13; Job 19:19; Ps. 41:9; 55:12-14; II Tim. 3:3; Luke 6:22.
3. Shame. Prov. 25:8; open embarrassment, dishonor or disgrace. Manner in which our Lord was accused of being conceived, born out-of-wedlock; also, manner in which His nakedness was openly displayed on the cross. Heb. 13:13; 11:26.
4. Falsely accused. Ps. 35:11; 27:12; Matt. 5:11; Acts 26:2,7; (Luke 23:2,5,10; Mark 14:55-60); Acts 16:19-23; 6:13.
5. Ensnare through deceit, trapping, tricks, seeking ways to accuse. Dan. 6:4,5; Luke 11:54; Matt. 10:16-18.
6. Object of conspiracy. II Sam. 15:12; Gen. 37:18; II Cor. 11:32; Acts 9:23.
7. Mocked - Ps. 42:3 - to scorn, to scoff, to sneer, to make a play of. Job 12:4; Matt. 27:29,31,41; Acts 2:13; 17:32; 17:18; Heb. 11:36.
8. Betrayed - treated treacherously. Matt. 24:10; Luke 21:16.
9. Despised - to have contempt for, to loathe, to think nothing of, to consider without honor. Luke 10:10; I Cor. 1:28; I Cor. 4:10c.
10. Hated by family. Matt. 10:21,34-36; (Micah 7:6) Luke 21:16.
11. Hated by men. Luke 21:17; Matt. 10:22.
12. Defamation of character, libel, slander, evil report. Jer. 20:10; Ps. 31:13; Job 19:19; I Pet. 2:12; I Cor. 4:13.
13. Feared by own people. Acts 9:26.
14. Subject to special trials. I Cor. 4:9-14; II Cor. 11:23-28.
15. Imprisoned. Luke 21:12; Acts 4:3; 5:18; 12:4; 16:24; II Cor. 11:23c; Heb 11:36b; II Cor. 6:5.
16. Beaten. Acts 5:40; 16:23; II Cor. 11:24; Matt 10:17; II Cor. 6:5.
17. Contradicting. Acts 13:45.
18. Stir against. Acts 6:12; 13:50; 14:2, 19; 19:23,25,26,29; 21:27.
19. Press charges before authorities. Acts 18:12; Matt. 10:17,18.
20. Threatened. Acts 4:18,21; 5:40.
21. Stoned. Acts 7:58,59; 14:19; II Cor. 11:25; Heb. 11:37.
22. Afflictions. II Tim. 3:11; Ps. 34:19.
23. Expulsion. Acts 13:50; John 16:2a.
24. Vex. Acts 12:1.
25. Exhaustion, extreme fatigue. II Cor. 11:27.
26. Hunger and thirst. II Cor. 11:27; I Cor. 4:11.
27. Spectacle. I Cor. 4:9 (Acts 9:16;20:23; 21:11) Heb. 10:33a.
28. Suffer physical need. I Cor. 4:11; Phil. 4:12; Heb. 11:37; II Cor. 6:4.
29. Severe workload - hard labor. I Cor. 4:12; II Cor. 11:23; I Thess. 2:9.
30. Martyrdom. Luke 21:16; Acts 7:59; 12:2; John 16:2.

31. Afflictions. II Tim. 1:8; II Tim. 4:5; Heb. 11:37; Matt. 24:9a; Ps. 34:19; II Cor. 2:4; 4:17; II Cor. 6:4; Heb. 10:32,33; Col. 1:24; I Thess. 1:6; 3,7; Heb. 11:25; James 5:10.
32. Poverty. II Cor. 6:10; Phil. 4:12.
33. Loss of property and material goods. Heb. 10:34b.

SOME ABSOLUTE NECESSITIES FOR OVERCOMING THROUGH PERSECUTION

I. Select and Disciple Spiritual Leaders According To The New Testament. Acts 14:22; Titus 1:5.

- A. New Testament leaders were not proud because of their position. I Tim. 3:6.
- B. New Testament leaders were true servants. I Pet. 5:3; John 13:14-17.
- C. New Testament leaders identified with the peoples.
- D. New Testament leaders were men of integrity and honesty, recognized - not just by Christians - but by all.
- E. New Testament leaders possessed special valor and courage that enabled them to remain true.

II. Take Time To Disciple. II Tim. 2:2.

- A. Select a limited number of God-chosen people to disciple. Luke 6:12.
- B. Spend time with your disciples. Mark 3:14.
- C. Teach them by example. I Cor. 4:15; Phil. 4:9; John 15:15.
- D. Give simple, clear instructions. Acts 20:27.
- E. Inspect assignments.
- F. Teach them accountability and build character. I Tim. 4:12-16.
- G. Intercede for them specifically by name daily. Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:4; Col. 1:3.

III. Our Families Must Be Protected.

- A. Make sure that each member is saved and that Christ is Lord. Col. 1:9-13; II Cor. 13:5; Rom. 8:1-14.
- B. Prepare each of our children for the storm clouds that will come upon them. Deut. 6:4-9; 20-25; 11:18-21; Prov. 6:20-24; Deut. 30:2; Gen. 18:17-19; Josh. 24:15.
- C. Stockpile Scriptures and Christian material to have always accessible to the family.
- D. Never forget to share with the less fortunate. Rom. 13:8; 12:9-18; I Cor. 16:1; Acts 20:35; Rom 15:1; Eph. 4:28; Gal. 6:2.

IV. Look For Alternative Ways And Methods To Carry On And Continue Witnessing For Christ. Matt. 16:18.

- A. Keep the youth active, involved and alive.
- B. Learn everything possible about others suffering and visit them. Heb. 13:3.
- C. Show genuine love by caring for all - especially in times of need. (Example: food, care, sharing during times of illness, special need, deaths.) Matt. 25:35-40; 5:43-45; James 1:27; II Tim. 1:16-18; Rom. 12:20.
- D. Guard against all bitterness. Rom. 12:14,17,19,21; Matt. 5:38-42.
- E. Do not repay evil with evil. Matt. 5:44; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60; I Cor. 4:11-13; I Pet. 2:23.
- F. Pray for your enemies. Matt. 5:44.

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

- I. God Is The Author And Founder Of The Home. Gen. 2:18:20-25; Matt. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:31.**
- II. God Instituted The Family As The Very First Human Institution.**
 - A. It is still God's chosen basic social entity for the welfare of a society. Deut. 11:18-21.
 - B. Repeatedly God has emphasized its importance through out the Scriptures. Ex. 20:14; Jerm. 35:1-19; Eph. 5:22-33.
- III. The New Testament Continues With The Old Testament Guidelines For The Family And Even Emphasizes Them Stronger. Mark 10:2-9; Rom. 7:2,3; Luke 16:18; I Cor. 7:10-17.**
- IV. Marriage And The Family Is A Gift From God And Is For The Welfare Of All.**
 - A. For man's happiness. Gen. 2:18.
 - B. For the continuance of the race. Gen. 1:28.
 - C. For the assurance of Godly seed. Mal. 2:14,15.
 - D. For the prevention of fornication. I Cor. 7:2,9.
 - E. For complete satisfaction. Prov. 5:19; I Tim. 2:15; 5:14.
- V. There Are Many Modern Day Attacks Against The Family.**
 - A. Economic pressures.
 - B. Immorality.
 - C. Television and Hollywood.
 - D. New Age and Humanistic Philosophies.
- VI. In Order To Survive, Christian Families Must Be Students Of The Word Of God and "Doers" As Well.**
 - A. The family must be able to function as if they were a church.
 - 1. Evangelizing.
 - 2. Teaching.
 - 3. Fellowshiping.
 - 4. Worshipping.
- VI. Carefully Evaluate And Ascertain What Will Be Necessary To Implement In Your Family To Bond, Strengthen And Prepare For All That May Come In The Future.**

THE NIGHT COMETH, WHEN NO MAN CAN WORK

John 9:4

Regardless of claims being made, there are still over 40 nations “closed” to the preaching of the Gospel. Other countries are in great danger of losing religious freedom and liberties. What about the souls in these countries. Jeremiah 8:20 is their cry and dilemma. We must “work the works of Him – while it is day.”

I. Considering The Words Of Christ.

- A. What can be meant by the word “night”. The absence of Christ somewhere or anywhere is equivalent to “night”. (Darkness - absence of light).
 - 1. When a government opposes Christ, “night” is present. Matt. 14:9-13.
 - 2. When people oppose the Gospel and the cause of Christ, it is “night”. Mark 5:17.
 - 3. When religion becomes inflamed with passion and rage and attacks God, it is “night”. Christ was crucified by religious Jews. Matt. 27:20-25.
 - 4. When sin is allowed in the believer’s life, unconfessed and not forsaken, it is “night”. I John 1:5,6.
 - 5. When Christ comes back for His own, “eternal night” will have arrived for many. Matt. 24:30,31.
- B. What can be meant by the word “work”.
 - 1. Obedience to the will of God is to “work the works of Him”. John 9:4.
 - 2. When we allow Christ to work in and through us - this is to “work the works of Him”. Matt. 5:15,16.

II. How Is The Night Coming When No One Can Work?

- A. The powers of darkness are working to bring darkness into the world and more specifically to certain areas.
Their Goal is: One world government, secular humanism, new age, communism traditional religions, false cults, modernism, liberalism, amorality and perversion. Eph. 5:11; 6:12.
- B. Satan sows seeds of darkness in hearts, churches and society. Matt. 13:24-28.
- C. Christ prophesied that darkness would come (night follows day) and there would be limitations placed on the work of the Lord. I Thess. 5:4-6.

III. Why Would The Night Come When No One Will Be Able To Work?

- A. It is a natural law that night comes after the day.
- B. We live in a vast field of wickedness and the Bible reveals that evil will grow worse and worse. II Tim. 3:13.
- C. Diminished light and cold, weak Christians will not affect this world. Matt. 6:22,23; 5:13-15; Rev. 3:15,16.
- D. During times of spiritual darkness sin is not seen as sin nor is error viewed as error. (Times of no absolutes and self and situational ethics reigning). II. Tim. 3:5,7-9; 4:3,4.

IV. What Must We Do?

- A. Take advantage of the light of the day.
 - 1. We must enter while doors are open. (Must get the Gospel to the greatest number of people possible with the most effective means possible in the least possible time).
 - 2. Discern the ripe fields of the world. (The Spirit of God prepares hearts in certain areas at special times).
 - 3. Know “open and tolerant” areas and take advantage of preparation for the Gospel by certain circumstances. (Example: Paul going to synagogues first in each city and building on their understanding of God and the Scriptures. Acts 13:5,14,15; 17:1-3; 18:2,4; 19:8).
 - 4. Beat the cults and “isms” to fields yet virgin.
- B. Do not substitute the Pure Gospel with social gospel, traditionalism cultural Christianity, churchanity, professionalism, Hollywoodism, church buildings, liberation theology or artificial trappings.
- C. It is time to act! (African Proverbs: “Run while the sun is hot”).
 - 1. Let us give ourselves to fasting and prayer, truly seeking the Lord. Prov. 8:17; Isaiah 55:6,7; Ps. 32:6,7.
 - 2. We must sanctify ourselves and renounce all known sin. Isaiah 1:16,17; Jerm. 4:14; Rom. 12:9; John 17:17.
 - 3. Walk in the Spirit and win souls. Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:25; Eph. 4:1; 5:15; Col. 1:10; Phil. 2:15,16.

TURNING TRIALS INTO TRIUMPHS

James 1:2-12

Popular preaching and teaching proclaims that the Christian life is without problems.

However, looking at it Biblically, one finds that God is the author of “strange ministries”. Through these ministries God intends that the believer get the best out of the worst. Blessings may come as Kings appearing as beggars; as Princes dressed as paupers. Blessings can be wrapped in the rags of a curse. Sorrow is a disguise that real joy wears. Through trials, affliction and suffering God desires to accomplish something otherwise not possible in our lives. God never wastes time and never wastes experiences - if we will but respond correctly. God is the Sovereign God of Providence. God wills it and, except it be because of sin and chastisement, the Christian must consider trials and suffering as natural and normal.

The difference in being happy or being unhappy is not the absence of trouble and problems. The difference lies in what you do with it.

TWO WAYS TO REACT

1. God’s way - accomplishes many things for good.
2. World’s way - reaction of carnality and the old nature is to question, doubt and complain which results in resentment, bitterness and premature death.

Recognize That Circumstances Are Not Just Chance: God Is In Control

1. They are of God.
2. They are good.

GOD WILL THAT:

1. Trials be turned to triumph,
2. Victims become victors,
3. Crosses become crowns,
4. Suffering is to become glory,
5. Battle is to be the means of victory.

James 1:2 - Count

1:3 - Know

1:4,9 - Let

1:5,6 - Ask

Four Essentials For Victory Over Trials

1. Joyful attitude - v.2
2. An Understanding mind - v.3
3. A Surrendered will - v. 4
4. A heart that wants to Believe. V. 6-8.

I. Count It All Joy. James 1:2 - A Joyful Attitude.

- A. Outlook determines outcome attitude will determine action.
- B. Trials are to be expected. v. 2; I Pet. 4:12.
- C. “When ye fall into divers temptations.” v. 2b. Various and varicolored. (Example: Like variegated yarn weaver uses to make rugs, blankets or serapes. Look at it from below - seems to be no pattern, only loose ends, rough, nothing visible to appreciate. Look from above - the intended side to be viewed, the pattern, design, beauty and purpose is seen.) So God arranges and blends experiences and happenings in our lives so that faith may be exercised and grow.
- D. Values determine evaluations.
 - 1. If you value comfort more than character, trials will not be allowed to accomplish the purpose of God.
 - 2. If you value the material and physical more than spiritual, one will be most miserable during testings.
 - 3. If you live for the present, rather than the future, trials will produce bitterness rather than betterment.

II. Know. James 1:3. An Understanding Mind.

- A. Faith is always tested. If not being tested, maybe it is a sign that there has never been saving faith.
- B. God tested Abraham in order to bless and to increase his faith through exercise.
 - 1. God tests to bring out the best.
 - 2. Satan tests and tempts to bring out the worst.
- C. Testing works for us - not against us. Rom. 8:28.
- D. Trials rightly used help us to mature. Rom. 5:3,4.
 - 1. Purpose, patience, endurance, preparation, perseverance, enablement (Get up, get started, continue, keep on going, finish the race).
 - 2. Patience is not a passive, fatalistic acceptance of circumstances. It is courageous perseverance in the face of suffering and difficulty.
 - 3. Impatience and unbelief always go together. Heb. 6:12; 10:36; Is. 28:16.

III. Let. James 1:4 A Surrendered Will.

God cannot work in us without our consent. If we encounter trials without surrendered wills, we will behave as spoiled, rotten, selfish, self-centered, immature children.

IV. Ask. James 1:5,6 A Heart That Wants To Believe.

- A. What should we pray for? WISDOM (Why not grace or strength?)
- B. Knowledge is the ability to take things apart; wisdom the ability to put them together again.
- C. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge.
- D. We need wisdom so we will not waste the opportunities God gives for our good, for our growth and for His glory.
- E. God allows things to come to build us up. Satan use things to tear us down.
- F. What will our reaction be?
 - 1. God’s way or the way of the old nature.
 - 2. Destruction, devastation, deviousness, detour - vs. exercise, edification, enablement, exaltation.

- G. Three kinds of faith is found in James' Epistle.
 - 1. Dead faith - only has to do with intellect.
 - 2. Demonic faith - has to do with emotions.
 - 3. Dynamic faith - reaches the will.
- H. Real faith will be seen.
 - 1. Mind understands the truth.
 - 2. Heart will desire and respond to the truth.
 - 3. Will will act upon the truth.

A CURE FOR DOUBT AND WORRY

Phil. 4:7; Gal. 3:23; I Pet. 1:5

1. Let the Peace of God be as an over flowing fountain or spring in you heart and life. Phil 4:7.
2. Renounce all doubt and worry. Phil. 4:6; James 4:7.
3. Guard your thoughts; think on the pure and correct. Phil. 4:8.
4. Focus your mind and eyes on the Lord and the things of God. Is. 26:3; Col. 3:1-3; Matt. 6:33.
5. Use supernatural weapons in all supernatural warfare. II Cor. 10:4-6.
6. Put on all the Armor of God. Eph. 6:10-18.
7. Have faith! Matt. 6:25-34; 7:7-11; 17:20; 21:22; Mark 11:22-24.
8. Walk in the Spirit. Gal. 5:16-26; Rom. 6:14-23; 8:1-13.
9. Keep your confidence only in God. Heb. 3:6, 12-14; 6:11,12; 10:19-23, 35-39.
10. Cast all care or concern on the Lord. I Pet. 5:7.

REWARDS FOR CHRISTIAN SUFFERING

I Peter 4:13

1. Glory in Heaven. II Cor. 4:17, 18; I Peter 5:1, 10, 11.
2. Eternal Consolation. II Cor. 1:7; Rom. 8:17.
3. Christ is Made Known. II Cor. 4:11.
4. Life is Being Given to Others. II Cor. 4:12.
5. Grace of God is Being Made Manifest. II Cor. 4:15.
6. A Guarantee That God Will Judge Righteously. II Thess. 1:4, 5.
7. Will Reign With him. II Tim. 2:12a.
8. Spirit of Glory Rests Upon. I Peter 4:14.
9. Glory is Brought to God. I Peter 4:16.
10. Reason For Joy. I Peter 4:13, 14.

7 FOLD EXAMPLE OF CHRIST IN SUFFERING

I Peter 2:21-24; 3:14-17

1. Sufferings. v. 21; Matt. 16:24; I John 2:6.
2. Sinlessness. v. 22; Isaiah 53:9.
3. Guilelessness. v. 22; Deceit.
4. Love When Being Mocked. v. 23; Isaiah 53:7; Rom. 12:14; Matt. 5:44-48; (James 1:2-4; Rom. 5:3)
5. Patience in Threatenings. v. 23; Rom. 12:12; Luke 21:19.
6. Resignation to God. v. 23; Luke 23:46; I Pet. 4:19. - Committed His Cause; Trusted it to God.
7. Righteousness. v. 24; - Just, Unbiased, Impartial.

A CREED FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED

I asked God for strength, that I
might achieve.

I was made weak, that I might
learn humbly to obey...

I asked for health, that I might
do great things.

I was given infirmity that I might
do better things...

I asked for riches, that I might
be happy.

I was given poverty, that I might
be wise...

I asked for power, that I might
have the praise of men.

I was given weakness, that I might
feel the need of God...

I asked for all things, that I might
enjoy life.

I was given life, that I might
enjoy all things.

I got nothing for which I asked for-
but everything for which I had hoped.
Almost despite myself, my
unspoken prayers were answered.

I am, among men, most richly blessed!

Selected

BEHOLD YOUR GOD

Isaiah 40:1,2,9

Text V. 9

The book of Isaiah is the Bible in miniature. It is comprised of 66 chapters; the Bible is made up of 66 books. The book of Isaiah is divided into two divisions; the Bible is made up of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The first division of the book of Isaiah contains 39 chapters; the Old Testament contains 39 books. The second division of Isaiah contains 27 chapters; the New Testament contains 27 books. Thirty nine chapters of Isaiah warn Judea of impending judgment. Twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah speak of captivity under foreign powers used by God in His sovereign plan.

Isaiah's ministry extended over a period of 60 years and was under the reign of 4 kings. (Isaiah 1:1) He died under the reign of Manases and was killed by being placed in the hollow trunk of a tree and was sawed asunder. The messages recorded in his book may represent only a part of his writings as mentioned in II Chronicles 26:22. Coming judgment prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of the throne of David. On the other hand, the Messianic hope is dominant throughout the entire book. Portrayed as the suffering servant and the ruler of the restored kingdom of absolute, perfect peace and righteousness, the Messiah is presented as the one in whom all people may trust.

Chapter forty is placed to prepare for suffering, as well as to counsel, to console and to inspire.

I. A Magnificent Shepherd. Isaiah 40:10,11.

God appears as a Shepherd. Luke 12:32 "My little flock". Picture of compassion, warmth, and love.

- A. A loving shepherd. John 10:11,12.
- B. A caring shepherd. Ps. 23:1; I Pet. 5:7.
- C. A guiding shepherd. John 10:3,4; Ps. 78:52,53.
- D. A sustaining shepherd. Ezek. 34:14,15.

Our shepherd has not changed - can do all that He has promised - and more.

II. A Marvelous Creator. Isaiah 40:12; 46:5,9,10; 48:12,13,14.

- A. All the waters are as a drop in the Hand of God. Seventy per cent of earth's surface is water. Nothing compared to the hand of God.
- B. The Greatness of God cannot be measured. Isaiah 46:5,9,10.
- C. It is the same God that measured the heavens and formed the mountains. Isaiah 48:12-14; 40:12-14.

III. A Great Sovereign. Isaiah 40:15-17, 23,24.

- A. The nations are no more than a drop of water on a bucket. Isaiah 40:15.
- B. Governments are in the hand of God to accomplish His purposes. Isaiah 40:17,23,24 (Are as fragile as hay, fodder and leaves).
- C. The woods of Lebanon are not sufficient to make a sacrifice or burnt offering to the True and Living God. Dan. 2:20-23.

IV. An Incomparable Sustainer. Isaiah 40:18-22; 28-31.

- A. Those with money have a golden image made - and a chain to secure it. Isaiah 40:19.
- B. The poor have a wooden image made with a platform that secures it. Isaiah 40:20. (What god is it that can be stolen or broken?) (Our God is immutable - does not change or vacillate. James 1:17; Num. 23:19-20.
- C. The universe cannot contain God. Isaiah 40:21,22. (Can your god be put in your pocket? Can your god be left at home? Can your god be stolen or burned or die?)
- D. God has unlimited wisdom Isaiah 40:28.
- E. God has the power to sustain miraculously. Isaiah 40:29,30.
- F. God promises continual renewal of strength, courage and fortitude.

IV. A Majestic Savior. Isaiah 40:2; 44:6; 47:4; Jerm. 50:23,24.

- A. All the eternal purpose of God is focused in and upon the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. Every thought, act of obedience and the ministry of the angels is concentrated in Christ.
- C. All the hate, strategy and wiles of astuteness converges against Christ.
- D. Every human hope is in Christ.
- E. All human occupation should be toward Christ.
- F. In the creation, the entire material universe is centralized in Christ.
- G. The written Word of God is a Christ centered book.
- H. The Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Lord Jesus Christ of the New Testament.

AN EXCELLENT SPIRIT

(Only men called such never faltered never fell into sin)

Daniel 6:3; 5:12 (Prov. 17:27)

Background of Daniel's life. Taken from family, home, land and country to a foreign land, foreign culture, name changed over, 70 years - under 3 pagan kings - Preferred above the presidents and princes.

1. Problems Did Not Make Him Bitter.

If anyone had an excuse to gripe, complain - was not a cry baby - was not on a continual pity party. Man is born to trouble - Job 14:1,2; Ecc. 2:23.

2. Was Not Negative Nor An Eternal Pessimist.

Was power conscious - was not problem conscious - was promise conscious. Did not enlarge on dark side or negative. How we react under adverse circumstances does determine outcome - How does trials of life affect you? (Ball of baked clay - wax - rubber ball - hammer.)

3. Others Recognize God In His Life. 4:9; 5:11.

A candlestick shines brightest when it is the darkest.
Spirit - eternal - given by God internal - the heart - source of - fountain - eternal - visible, that which others see.

How is it possible to have a more excellent spirit.

- 1. Trusting Attitude** - Rom. 8:28; Like Joseph - you meant it for evil - God meant for good.
- 2. Positive Attitude** - Phil. 4:13; II Cor. 9:8; Eph. 3:20.
- 3. Thankful Attitude** - Phil. 4:8; James 1:2-4; Changed kings - changes empires - His Spirit commanded attention.
- 5. Determined Attitude** - Dan. 1:8; Such a spirit is not an accident. Does not just wake up with such a Spirit one day.
- 6. Servant Attitude** - God had put him there, recognized sovereignty of God - m authority was in power by hand of God, was not necessary to submit. Served on Godly men - thus was elevated. Did not compromise. Phil. 2:5-8; Matt. 20:28.
- 7. Tested Attitude** - Dan. 6:4,5. After every great blessing - great testing. Neither was there any error or fault found in him. 6:4, He Was Faithful! Only could set a trap - subtle - sneaking - twisted. God did not fail him in that hour. Josh. 21:45; I Kings 8:56; Heb. 13:5,6.

CHRISTIAN SUFFERINGS

I Peter 4:16

1. Persecutions for Righteousness. Matt. 5:10; 13:21; Mark 10:30; John 15:20.
2. Revilings and Slander. Matt. 5:11, 12; 10:25; Acts 13:45; I Pet. 4:4.
3. False Accusations. Matt. 10:17-20.
4. Scourgings for Christ. Matt. 10:17.
5. Rejection by Men. Matt. 10:14.
6. Hatred by the World. Matt. 10:22; John 15:18-21.
7. Hatred by relatives. Matt. 10:21-36.
8. Martyrdoms. Matt. 10:28; Acts 7:58.
9. Temptations. Luke 8:13; James 1:2-16.
10. Shame for His Name. Acts 5:41.
11. Imprisonments. Acts 4:3; 5:18; 12:4.
12. Tribulations. Acts. 14:22; II Thess. 1:4.
13. Stonings. Acts 14:19; II Cor. 11:25.
14. Beatings. Acts 16:23; II Cor. 11:24,25.
15. Being a Spectacle to Men. I Cor. 4:9.
16. Misunderstandings, Necessities, Defamation and Despising. I Cor. 4:10-13.
17. Troubles, Afflictions, Distresses, Tumults, Labors, Watchings, Fastings and Evil Reports. II Cor. 6:8-11; 6:4-5.
18. Reproaches. Heb. 13:13; I Pet. 4:14.
19. Trials. I Pet. 1:7; 4:12.
20. Satanic Opposition. Eph. 4:27; 6:12; Phil. 1:28.
21. Groanings and Travailings Because of the Curse. Rom. 8:17-26.

Some Lessons On Preparation For Persecution

Counsel to Servants and Slaves
Biblical Admonition to Employees and Workers

Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-25

1. Obey Master In Everything. Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22.
2. Responsible - With Fear and Trembling. Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22
In all things - fearing God
(Not choosing our likes or dislikes; not choosing to do pleasant things and rejecting unpleasant things.)
3. Not Serving To Be Seen. Eph. 6:6a; Col. 3:22c.
4. Doing The Will Of God. Eph. 6:6c; Col. 3:22c.
5. From The Heart. Eph. 6:6d; Col. 3:22d. Whole-heartily.
6. With Good Will - Gladly and Joyfully. Eph. 6:7.
7. If Not Recognized By Men, Will Be Recognized By The Lord. Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:24,25.
The Lord will reward. Gal. 6:7-9.

Titus 2:9,10

1. Be Obedient To Master. Titus 2:9a.
2. Please Well In All Things. Titus 2:9b.
3. Not Answering Back. Titus 2:9c. Not contradicting; Not putting the other person in bad light.
4. Not Purloining. Titus 2:10a. Not stealing or defrauding; not robbing time nor quality of workmanship.
5. Showing Good Fidelity. Titus 2:10b. Faithful in all things, both large and small. Luke 16:10.
6. Adorn The Doctrine. Titus 2:10c. Make attractive by good attitude. (An incorrect attitude will talk louder than verbal teaching-gripping, complaining, murmuring.)

I Peter 2:18-20

1. Be Subject. I Pet. 2:18a. Submit, accountable to, answerable to, dependent upon, responsible to, bound by, controlled by or under the control of, under the thumb of another.
2. With All Fear. I Pet. 2:18b. Having respect to or recognizing the position of another.
3. Suffer Wrongfully. I Pet. 2:19,20. With patience; not deliberate martyrdom or suffering.
4. Follow The Example Of Christ. I Pet. 2:21-23. Called to follow in the steps of Christ.

MY SPIRITUAL INVENTORY

“Remember His marvelous works that He hath done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth.” I Chronicles 16:12.

Take a few minutes to meditate on each point, then prayerfully ask the Lord what you should write down.

THE PAST

1. List the greatest blessings from this past year:

a. In your family:

b. In your work:

c. In your personal life:

2. What was the greatest trial and what have you learned from it?

3. List in order the best of your answers to prayer in the year gone by.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

4. List any past happenings or circumstance you do not understand. Then read Deut. 29:29; Prov. 3:5,6; Ecc. 3:14.

5. List a specific lesson the Lord taught you last year.

What you are praying and studying now is what you are going to be for God.

IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN HERE

1. How did the people react to Noah's message? Matt. 24:37-39. _____

2. What did Peter say when Jesus told him that He would suffer and die soon? Matt. 16:21,22. _____
3. How did Jesus react to this? Matt. 16:23. _____

4. What did Jesus say on another occasion about His coming suffering? Matt. 26:31

5. How did Peter react? Matt. 26:33-35. _____

6. What happened when this actually took place? Matt. 26:69-75. _____

7. Why did Peter deny his faith? _____

8. Was the situation unique in the case of Peter? _____

9. Can you quote other examples where people were faced with the same choice?
From the Bible _____
From somewhere in our world _____
10. What does I Thess. 5:3 say about people who believe nothing can disrupt their security?

11. Peter had to learn this in his own life with Christ. Explain something of this example.
Matt. 14:29-31. _____

12. By allowing himself to be led by circumstances, Lot made the wrong choice.
 - A. What choice was this? Gen. 13:10,11. _____

 - B. What was the result? Gen. 19:15-26. _____

C. Why did Lot never think about the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah?

D. How did sons-in-law react? Gen. 19:14. _____

13. What happened unexpectedly to the rich man in the parable told by Jesus? Luke 12:16-21.

14. What promise does God give to those who live for Him and serve Him? Amos 3:7.

15. What does the Lord say we must do in times of disaster and forth coming persecution? Luke 21:28. _____

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF PERSECUTION

1. According to John 15:18-21, what is the reason for Christian persecution? _____

2. How were the disciples strengthened by Paul and Barnabas? Acts 14:22. _____

3. Against whom was the persecution actually directed? Acts 9:4,5. _____

4. According to II Tim. 3:12, is persecution:
(A.) unlikely? (B.) likely? (C.) inevitable?

5. Give some reasons why many Christians forsake Christ. Matt. 13:20,21. _____

6. What does Christ expect from us in Matt. 16:24?

A. _____
B. _____
C. _____

7. What does the Lord promise to those who are prepared to be persecuted? Matt. 5:10-12.

A. _____
B. _____
C. _____

8. God's promises are almost always preceded by a condition. Example: Rev. 3:20.

What is the condition? _____

What is the promise? _____

9. Name at least three similar texts. _____

10. Which condition precedes the promise God gave to Israel in Deut. 11:22?

A. _____
B. _____
C. _____

- D. _____
11. When can we depend on God's promises for:
A. Peace. Is. 26:3 _____
B. Political stability? I Tim. 2:1-3. _____

12. What should our attitude be towards those who persecute us?
A. Matt. 5:44 _____
B. Luke 23:34 _____
13. What were Peter and John's reactions when they were beaten for their faith? Acts 5:41

14. What was the context of the disciples' prayer when they were persecuted? Acts 4:23-30

15. What type of suffering is mentioned in Romans 8:35-39? _____

16. What does the Bible say about victory in Rom. 8:31-39? _____

17. Name at least three verses which indicate that all Christians will be persecuted. _____

18. Although strife and persecution will increase, victory is a certainty. Why? _____

Do you have a proof verse or verses? _____

19. What must each Christian do to be able to overcome personally? Eph. 6:10-18 _____

20. Which part of the armor is lacking most in your own personal life? _____

21. Would you like to bring about a change? _____
Specify _____

22. In Rev. 12:11, three ways to overcome Satan are mentioned. What are they? A. _____
_____ B. _____ C. _____

CHECK UP

Do you have regular victory in:

- a. Your devotional life? Yes _____ No _____
- b. Your attitudes? Yes _____ No _____
- c. Control of tongue, anger? Yes _____ No _____
- d. Doing God's will? Yes _____ No _____
- e. Leading your children in devotions? Yes _____ No _____
- f. Appetites of your body, eyes, etc.? Yes _____ No _____

DOCTRINE OF PERSECUTION. CHURCH OF THE FUTURE?

1. What other name is the church of Christ known by? I Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:23. _____
_____.
2. What are the believers called by Peter in I Peter 2:9,10? _____
3. What ministries did Christ give to the church? Eph. 4:11. _____
_____.
4. For what purpose? Eph. 4:12. _____
_____.
5. How will the body grow and be joined together? Eph. 4:15,16. _____
_____.
6. Does the future of a New Testament Church depend on the presence of a church building? Compare I Peter 2:5 and I Cor. 3:16. _____
_____.
7. What does Heb. 10:24,25 say about the coming together of the church? _____
_____.
8. Where did the churches of Priscilla and Aquila meet? Rom. 16:5.

_____.
9. Was this an exception or did it happen at other places? Acts 12:12; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2.
_____.
10. Name advantages and disadvantages of house churches? _____
_____.
11. Is this the path to follow in preparation for persecution? _____.
12. Where did Paul preach and teach?
 - A. Acts 20:8. _____.
 - B. Acts 17:1,2. _____.
 - C. Acts 20:20. _____.
 - D. Acts 17:17. _____.

CHRISTIANS PERSECUTING CHRISTIANS

Matt. 24:10

1. Where are we warned that persecution does not necessarily come from the outside, but from believers. Acts 20:29,30. _____
_____.
2. What does Matt. 24:10 say about this? _____
_____.
3. Who were, according to Stephen, the murderers of Christ? Acts 7:51,52. _____
_____.
4. What is the reason for division and persecution? I Cor. 3:3,4. _____
_____.
5. Differences can sometimes lead to discord and division. Describe this in connection with Acts 15:36-40. _____
_____.
6. What was Paul's attitude toward John Mark later on? II Tim. 4:11. _____
_____.
7. What did Christ pray for in respect to His Church? John 17:21. _____
_____.
8. What advice did Paul give the church in Philippi to foster unity? Phil. 2:2-5. _____
_____.

SPIRITUAL OR CAPABLE LEADERS

Each church has a tremendous need for spiritual leaders - people who are called by God to serve Him. This not only applies to ministers, but to all Christians, who are involved in a local church in any way.

If God calls people, He is not interested in whether they have a title or not, nor if they have a position of leadership in the world. He looks for people who know that they cannot serve Him in their own strength, but only in the power of the Holy Spirit. I Cor. 2:1-5; II Cor. 4:1-5; I Cor. 1:19-31.

1. What requirements does Peter propose in Acts 6:3 for the appointment of spiritual leaders?

_____.
2. What qualities should bishops, pastors, or elders of a church possess? I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9. _____
_____.
3. Deacons? I Tim. 3:8-13. _____
_____.
4. Is eloquence and intellectual ability an absolute requirement for office bearers? I Cor. 2:1-5.
_____.
5. Why is it so important that spiritual leaders should be aware of their own weakness? Compare I Cor. 2:5 with Isaiah 42:8. _____
_____.
6. How was the church of Sardis known? Rev. 3:1 _____

By the people or by the Lord? _____.
7. What did the church of Laodicea think of herself? Rev. 3:17. _____
_____.
8. What did Christ think of this church? Rev. 3:17b. _____
_____.
9. Why did the Lord bless the church of Philadelphia? Rev. 3:7,8.

_____.
10. The church of Smyrna was poor and weak. How did the Lord encourage this suffering church? Rev. 2:8,10. _____

11. Do spiritual leaders sometimes experience times of doubt and discouragement, or are they always positive and confident? Compare John 1:29 with Luke 7:19-23. _____

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PERSECUTION

1. Why did God send the Holy Spirit?
 - A. John 14:26. _____.
 - B. John 16:8. _____.
 - C. Rom. 8:16. _____.
 - D. John 14:16-17. _____.
 - E. John 16:13-14. _____.

2. We read about the fruits of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22. Which fruit of the Spirit do you think you would require during times of persecution? Why? _____
_____.

3. Can persecution impede the work of the Holy Spirit? John 3:8 _____
_____.

4. Does persecution always come unexpectedly or does the Holy Spirit prepare us? Acts 20:22-23. _____.

5. What is God's commandment to His children regarding the Holy Spirit? Eph. 5:18. _____
_____.

6. The Holy Spirit gives gifts to the church. Which gifts are described in Romans 12:6-8? _____
_____.

7. Does the Holy Spirit only give gifts to certain leaders in churches or to all church members? I Cor. 12:7,11. _____
_____.

8. What part should each believer take when coming together for worship? I Cor. 14:26. _____
_____.

9. If persecution comes, and the Bible is a forbidden book, and there is no one to lead the services, on whom then can we depend?
 - A. I Cor. 12:7. _____.
 - B. John 14:26. _____.
 - C. John 16:13. _____.

10. What should our attitude be towards those who suffer for their faith? I Cor. 12:26. _____
_____.

BLESSING THROUGH SUFFERING

Job 1:1-22; 2:1-13

Nothing confuses us and tries our faith like seeing bad things happen to good people. The fairness of God sometimes comes into question when a young father is killed, leaving a wife and small children, or when a young child is diagnosed with cancer. Others have difficulty with a Christian being falsely accused and going to prison as a result. Other examples: missionaries taken hostage by guerrillas; a missionary wife contracting AIDS because of a contaminated blood transfusion, etc. Sometimes life seems so unfair because bad things happen to the best of people. All have a tendency to ask, "How can a good God let such bad things happen to people who least deserve them?"

The confusion associated with adversity and suffering is as old as time itself. Consider Job! When we think about bad things happening to good people, Job would have to be the first on the list. There is no record in all of history of a better person who had worse things happen to him or her.

The book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible. Although the Book of Genesis comes first in our Bible, it was not the first written. In fact, this book of Job may be the oldest book in the world.

Job was a literal person in history and these events did take place.

Dr. Richard G. Moulton, an acknowledged literary authority, declares it to be his belief that if a jury of persons well instructed in literature were empanelled to pronounce as to which is the greatest poem in the world's great literatures, the large majority would give their verdict for the Book of Job. It is a literary masterpiece.

Job is the first book in the division of the poetical books of the Bible. Chapters one and two are not poetry, but an historical prologue to the poem. The poem ends at Chapter forty two verse five and six, with Job's words:

"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eyes seeth thee:
Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

In a general sense, the design of this book is "to justify the ways of God to man," by correcting certain misconceptions which arise from men's imperfect knowledge. The special object is to show that there is a benevolent Divine purpose, if we only knew all the facts and could see the whole picture.

Precisely this is the point which gives the whole book it's meaning for us - Job did not know. Try to get the picture and view the book overall in your mind. First, Chapters one and two reveal how Job's trials originated in the counsels of heaven, and Chapter forty two shows how Job's trial came to enrichment and greater blessing in the end than in the beginning. Chapters four through thirty seven unveils Job's friends who theorize from their points of view which were built on incomplete premises and insufficient data. They knew nothing about the counsels of heaven which had preceded Job's trial, and they knew nothing about the coming time of special compensation. They were philosophizing in the dark. Even though Job and his friends did not know it, there was an explanation for the suffering. When battling affliction comes our way, we have every right to believe that the same principles applies in our own case - there is indeed a

purpose in the counsels of heaven for our suffering, and likewise a foreknown outcome of blessing.

The fact is, Job was not meant to know the explanation of his trial, and on this simple fact everything hangs. If Job had known, there would have been no place for faith; and he could never have come forth as gold purified in the fire. We must understand that there are some things which God cannot reveal to us at present, for the very revealing of them would hinder His purposes for our good. The scriptures are as wise in their reservations as they are in their revelations. Enough is revealed to make faith intelligent. Enough is reserved to give faith scope for development.

Some Truths to Note about Satan

I. Satan Is Accountable To God. Job 1: 6, 7

II. Even The Dark, Evil Mind Of Satan Is An Open Book To God. Job 1:8-11

III. Satan Is Behind The Evils That Curse The Earth. Job 1:11

IV. Satan Is Neither Omnipresent Nor Omniscient.

V. Satan Can Do Nothing Without Divine Permission. Job 1:12

VI. In Every Permission Given To Satan There Is Definite Limitation. Job 1:12; 2:6

VII. God's Eyes Are Ever On His Own People, And Especially So In Times Of Trial.

Careless seems the great Avenger,
History's pages but record
One death grapple in the darkness,
'Twixt old systems and the Word;
Truth for ever on the scaffold,
Wrong for ever on the throne;
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadows,
Keeping watch upon his own.
Lowell

Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side.
Bear patiently the cross of grief or shame.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul; Thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He hath the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt belo
Katherine Von Schlexel

Not oft mid busy servings
Life's deepest truths are learned;
Not oft mid noisy strivings
The Spirit's voice discerned.
Not in life's crowded places,
Where jostling cares intrude,
But, in life's lonely spaces,
God speaks in solitude.

The solitude of illness-
The loneness, ling'ring drear,
'Tis oft predestined stillness,
The voice of Heav'n to hear.
Old age- Sad isolation
When friends of yore are gone,
Oft brings most revelation
Of the abiding One.

Affliction's deprivation-
Blind eyes, deaf ears, spent powers,
Ah, painful separation
To lonely, trying hours!
The loneliness when heart breaketh,
And none on earth can ease;
Ah, most of all God speaketh
In solitude like these.

The prophet's lone vocation,
Some heavenly call pursued,
The far-flung mission station-
These bring their solitude.
Thrice-blessed heart-break places,
Where love and drear we pled!
For in life's lonliest spaces
We most discover **GOD**.
J. Sidlow Baxter

He never fails the soul that trusts in Him;
Tho' disappointments come and hope burns dim,
He never fails,
Tho' trials surge like stormy seas around,
Tho' testings fierce like ambushed foes abound,
Yet this my soul, with millions more has found,
He never fails; He never fails.

He never fails the soul that trusts in Him;
Tho' angry skies with thunder-clouds grow grim,
He never fails.
Tho' icy blasts life's fairest flow'rs lay low,
Tho' earthly springs of joy all cease to flow,
Yet still 'tis true, with millions more I know,
He never fails; He never fails.

He never fails the soul that trusts in Him;
Tho' sorrow's cup shall overflow the brim,
He never fails.
Tho' oft the pilgrim way seems rough and long,
I yet shall stand amid you white-robed throng,
And there I'll sing, with millions more, this song-
He never fails; He never fails.

J. Sidlow Baxter

WHEN ADVERSITY COMES

Job 1:1-21

The confusion associated with adversity and suffering is as old as time itself. Consider Job. When we think about bad things happening to good people, Job would be first on the list. There is no record in all history of a better person who had worse things happen to him or her.

I. Job's Piety 1:1

The book introduces us to a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job. Uz is believed to have been East of Canaan and on the border of Arabia. It was a place of good farming and pasture near to a city.

Four things are stated about Job's character:

- A. Job was "perfect." The root of the Hebrew word means "complete" referring to spiritual maturity. Blameless is another word that is synonymous with perfect. Job was not sinless but a complete man in contrast to an incomplete person who might have integrity and lack compassion.
- B. Job was "upright." This means Job was "straightforward." In other words he was not deceitful. His word was always good and clear.
- C. Job "feared God." The phrase "feared God" literally means "revered God." He understood the holiness of God and how terrible sin was to a holy God. Job was not afraid of God but knew God was a holy God and righteous in all His ways, as well as just. Prov. 1:7. Job's fear was a holy respect that led to obedience. "The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else." Oswald Chambers
- D. Job "eschewed evil." In other words, he "shunned evil." Job "turned away from evil." I Thess. 5:22

II. Job's Prosperity 1:2-8

- A. Job was blessed with a family. 1:2
 1. He was an ideal father who made-to-do over things that were important to his children. 1:4
 2. He was not only right with God, but he also wanted his children right with God. 1:5; Eph 6:4.
- B. Job was a very wealthy man. 1:3
 1. In ancient times wealth was measured in terms of land, animals and servants, and Job had an abundance of all three.
 2. No one in that part of the world was wealthier than Job. "So than this man was the greatest of all the men of the East." 1:3d

III. Job's Problems 1:9, 10

- A. Satan accuses Job before God of having a weak and superficial faith. 1:9-11
 1. There is a very real devil who tries to destroy everything that is holy and just.
 2. As Christians, all of us have an enemy who is seeking to devour, literally "swallow," us. I Peter 5:8.

- a. When a lion roars it creates fear and sometimes causes a scared sheep to flee from the flock and become easy prey.
 - b. In a similar way the devil "roars" through adversity, hoping we will leave the flock, drop out of church, and become easy prey.
 - c. It is very important that we continue to attend Bible study and worship when we hear the devil "roar through adversity," lest we become an easy target.
3. The purpose of Satan is to destroy our faith and discredit the goodness of God.
 - a. Satan knew that Job was such a well-known person that if he could shake his faith in God, it would weaken the faith of everyone that knew Job.
 - b. This is one of the reasons the devil "roars" through adversity in the life of the best of people. (The devil's purpose is to shatter our faith in God to the point that others will take note.)
 - c. If Satan can get good people to doubt God and become bitter, he can cause other people to doubt the goodness and credibility of God.
- B. With God's permission, Satan tries to destroy Job's faith in God.
1. All of Job's wealth was lost. 1:14-17
 2. While Job was being told of all his material losses, another messenger comes with more tragic news - the loss of his children. 1:18, 19
 3. News of these tragedies came on the heels of each other, all on the same day.
 4. The timing of it all was a mystery to Job.
 - a. "Truth is always strange; stranger than fiction." Byron
 - b. Even fiction could not top the strangeness of what happened to Job.

IV. Job's Prayer 1:20, 21

One day Job is blessed beyond measure with family and fortune; the next he finds himself as desolate as a human can be. What would be Job's reaction?

- A. "Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped. 1:20. (Tearing one's clothes and shaving one's hair were common gestures of profound grief in Bible times).
1. Showing his grief and sorrow was not a sign of weakness or spiritual immaturity.
 2. It was the natural and beneficial thing for Job to do. (A tragedy of our modern world is the suppression of grief or denial of reality-which is a God-given emotional relief valve).
- B. Job prayed, praised the Lord and "sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." 1:21, 22. (Much can be learned about Job from his prayer).
1. Job realized that everything he had came from God.
 2. Job knew the hand who had given it all to him had every right to take it away, and if He did take it away Job would still believe in His goodness.
 3. Job's great faith is revealed because in the midst of sorrow and suffering he could say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord."
 - a. Though deprived of family and fortune, Job was praising God instead of cursing Him, as Satan had predicted.
 - b. Job was not praising God for what he had lost, but for God allowing him to have it in the first place.

4. Another lesson to learn from Job is that one cannot prepare for adversity after it comes. Prov. 24:10
 - a. The real strength of our faith is revealed when the vicious storms and tornadoes of life hit us. Jer. 12:5

If you are barely able to handle the routine problems of life, what are you going to do when a violent "roar" of the evil one comes?

There was a time years ago when the countertops in banks were made of marble so as to detect counterfeit coins. A banker could tell if a coin was real or counterfeit by the ring it made when it hit the marble.

God allowed Satan to give Job a few hits to see how he would "ring." Was Job real or not? The "rings" from Job's life when hit with adversity would reveal the quality and genuineness of his faith in God.

When you take some serious hits in life, how does your faith "ring?" How can you prepare for the hard hits of life? List two things you can do to be better prepared for the adversities of life.

WHAT A HURTING FRIEND NEEDS MOST

Job chapters 4-7

Job had three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, who came to comfort him. In their coming to comfort their suffering friend they did some things right. First, they traveled long distances to visit him. Second they let him vent his frustration and bitterness.

Job expressed his bitterness and hopelessness in 3:11-26.

Notice especially verse 11. It takes much patience and love to listen to that kind of a statement from a respected believer. Most friends would have left, but Job's did not.

One of the most important things that can be done when someone is experiencing testing or suffering is to listen without criticizing. Also, timing in defending God is important. It may not be the time to remind them of the faithfulness of God until they have had their say. Let them vent their emotional pain. When people are hurting they need someone to listen patiently to their bitterness and yet love them no less for being honest about their feelings.

Job's friends did some things right. They allowed him to speak his piece. Also, as they were listening they collected their thoughts for the speeches that are found in the book of Job. However, there were some things that Job's friends did wrong and we will consider them.

I. Eliphaz's Rationalization (Chapters 4-5)

Job's friends sat and listened to him for seven days. He was apparently the oldest of Job's three friends and for that reason speaks first. He says in 4:2, "If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved?"

Eliphaz says in verse 3 and 4 three things to Job.

1. Job had instructed many.
2. Job had strengthened weak hands and feeble knees.
3. Job had helped sustain and lift some that had been falling.

But Eliphaz then goes further, and in essence says, "Job you can't practice what you preach" (4:5). Eliphaz says that Job could give good advice to others when they were having adversity, but when trials come into his life he falters or is troubled. "Job, you can talk the talk, but you can't walk the walk."

Eliphaz states in verse six, should one have confidence in the fact that he fears God and that God always blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked. In verse seven, Eliphaz states actually that a good person will never suffer to the point of death and the righteous will not die that way. In other words, "Job, have you ever known a good person to suffer to the point of death like you are? Can you name just one?"

Eliphaz then presents two arguments to prove his point.

First, in 4:12-21 he relates a hair raising experience (verse 15) in which he received a revelation from God. Considering the context it does not look much like God really

spoke to him. To us today, visions are no longer necessary because we have the complete canon of the Scriptures. We must always compare Scripture with Scripture. Our practice should be that of the Bereans in Acts 17:11.

Secondly, Eliphaz bases the second argument on his life experiences (5:1-7). Eliphaz implies that Job is acting foolishly. He sums up this argument with “yet men is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (ver. 7). In other words, sorrow and tragedy is part of life. Life is like a grindstone. It can grind us down or sharpen us up. The grindstone of life will do one of two things to us - it makes us better or bitter. In the midst of adversity some people become more loving and more compassionate, while others become angry and cut and slash with their tongue. It is not what happens to us that determines what kind of people we will be but how we react that makes all the difference.

It has been said that “the same sun that hardens clay also melts butter.” Why is it that the same cause produces different effects? The reason is in the reaction of the substance. As human beings we are different from clay or butter in that we have a choice as to how we will react to the heat of trials afflictions or suffering. We have no control over what happens to us, but we can control how we react to what happens to us. We decide whether the bad things that happen to us in life will make us better or bitter.

In verses 8-17, Eliphaz reveals that he believes all of Job’s problems are a result of sin in his life. In verse 17 he implies that that which Job is experiencing is the chastening of God. God only chastens because of sin in the life.

II. Job’s Reply (6:1-7:21)

In chapter 6 Job reveals his disappointment with his friends. Though only Eliphaz spoke, it appears that Bildad and Zophar agreed with what he had said.

Job’s friends did not understand the torment of his suffering nor the bitterness that he felt. Job felt that he was a target at which God was shooting arrows of adversity (6:4).

In verse 5 Job asks, “Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? Or loweth the ox over his fodder?” Job was claiming the right make a harsh cry of complaint or bellow like an ox deprived of hay and left to starve. When these animals are well-fed they are silent. Job was starving or hurting for understanding and compassion from his friends. Eliphaz’s speech only made Job feel worse.

What Job needed was not a lecture or criticism, but pity and kindness (ver. 14).

We are commanded in Ephesians 4:32 to be kind and tenderhearted. In I Corinthians 13:4 the Bible says love is kind. There are at least three manifestations of kindness.

1. Kindness always shows compassion Luke 10:30-35. If we are “kind” we will have compassion for the needs and feelings of others and seek to do something to help. When adversity comes many people, beaten and bruised by emotional pain and disillusionment, are left to suffer beside the road of life.

2. Kindness always seeks to bring relief to the hurt and burden of others. Read Matthew 11:28-30. The Greek word translated easy (chrestos) is the same word translated kind in I Cor. 13:4. The illustration is of a yoke of oxen. A farmer in the days of the New Testament would train a young, inexperienced ox by having it walk alongside an experienced ox but not carry the load. The inexperienced ox did not carry the load but was simply learning how to plow walking alongside the experienced ox, Galatians 6:2 applies here. The law of Christ is best summed up in the commandment of Christ in John 13:34.
3. Kindness is understanding that the experience is painful and confusing. It should not be our purpose to make the person feel guilty for their pain, sorrow, or confusion. Kindness is letting the person know it is all right to hurt and grieve.

WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN

JOB 8-10

In the previous lesson we saw that what a hurting friend needs most is kindness. Kindness is love in action. Kindness will reveal itself through compassion, seeks to relieve the burden, and tries to understand the pain. When someone is hurting they do not need theology or lecture on how they ought to feel. They just need kindness.

We considered Eliphaz's rationalization (chapters 4-5) and Job's reply (chapters 6-7). We will now consider Job's friend Bildad.

I. Bildad's Accusations. (chapter 8)

- A. In response to Job's plea for kindness and understanding, Bildad accuses Job of being nothing but a wind bag. Job 8:2.
- B. Bildad felt a responsibility to defend God so he reminds Job of God's character. Job 8:3.
- C. Bildad says Job's children had died because they had sinned. Job 8:4.
- D. Bildad was so concerned with defending God that he forgot the needs of Job. Many, many people, when they should be giving comfort and consolation, make the hurting feel worse, much worse.
- E. Bildad turned to nature to prove that Job had forsaken God. Job 8:11-13. Since Job seemed to be withering spiritually like a plant without water, then it was logical that Job had forsaken God.
- F. Bildad continues his argument by saying the hypocrite is like a plant with shallow roots clinging to rocks. Job 8:16-19. The conclusion is that Job is a hypocrite for unless there were something wrong with him, God would not uproot him. Job 8:20.
- G. Bildad was sure that God had rejected Job and all Job had to do was turn to God in repentance. Job 8:21. We must be careful that we do not over-simplify relief from suffering, trial, and adversity.

II. Job's Answer. (chapter 9-10).

- A. Job's first response to Bildad's accusation was "I know it is of a truth." Job 9:2. Job was confused and frustrated. He did not understand why God was allowing such things to happen to him.
- B. Job believed it to be true that God punishes evil and rewards righteousness but he believed himself to be innocent of any sin that would justify the punishment he was receiving. Job 9:3,4.
- C. Job longed for a mediator - one who intervenes between two parties with a view to producing reconciliation. We now have an exclusive Mediator between God and man. I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:16.
- D. Up to the time of the death of Christ, no one could approach God except with a sacrifice for their sins and the priests at the temple acting as mediators. Though we have no right to approach a holy God on our own, the Lord Jesus Christ offers us His righteousness so we can come directly into the presence of God with His acting as Mediator.

- E. In chapter 10 Job pleads with God - not his friends. Job 10:2.
 - 1. Job in his confusion, felt that God was condemning him - without revealing the charges.
 - 2. Job thought God was angry with him - and in his current state of mind wished he had died at birth. Job 10:18.
 - 3. Since his life had no purpose, Job begged God to leave him alone. Job 10:20,21.
- F. At the time of tragedy all have asked the question, "why?"
 - 1. When a young mother's life is taken by an automobile accident "why?"
 - 2. When Jim Elliot and four other missionaries were killed in Ecuador by the Auca Indians they were trying to win to Christ, many asked, "why?"
Jim Elliot said it sometime before his death, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."
 - 3. It might be well to memorize James 5:10,11.
- G. It was not God who sent thieves to steal Job's camels, oxen, and donkeys (1:14,15,17) or fire to consume his sheep (1:16). It was not God who sent the great wind that killed his children (1:19). It was not God who afflicted Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head (2:7). It was Satan!
- H. Keep in mind, it was God who had given Job all that he had in the first place. When suffering and adversity comes, James 1:17 should be consulted and remembered.
- I. Satan is the cause of all suffering, affliction and adversity. They were never a part of God's original plan but came into His creation only after sin entered the world. (Gen. 3:17-19).
- J. The effects of sin unleashed upon the world will continue until the new heaven and the new earth comes. Rev. 21:4.

THE BENEFIT OF SUFFERING

Job 15-17

A second round of speeches begins in chapter 15. Job's three friends insist even more vehemently that Job's suffering is a result of sin. In the second round they become even more vicious than in the first round, accusing Job of being a hardened sinner who is defiant to God. This viciousness is in defense of their theology and a means of keeping their own peace of mind. If Job was not being punished for his sin then their idea of God and His working in the world was all wrong. Even more frightening, if living righteously did not offer exemption from adversity then what was happening to Job could happen to them.

I. Eliphaz's Reprimand (chapter 15).

- A. Eliphaz tries to shame Job into silence, in the first 13 verses of this chapter, by accusing him of irreverent talk. Job 15:1-13 (note vs. 5).
- B. Job is rebuked by Eliphaz for being arrogant. Eliphaz, says he and the friends, are wiser than Job and that they are much older. Job 15:8-10. Eliphaz was more of a prosecutor than a consoler.
- C. Eliphaz saw himself and his friends as direct messengers from God and Job should have been content with the consolations he was receiving. Job 15:11. His premise was that if Job was resisting their counsel, he was resisting God.
- D. Eliphaz attacked Job's claim and he insists that a mortal man, a human being, cannot be pure before God. Job 15:14-16.
- E. Inference is made that Job's theology had been perverted by pagans. Job 15:17-20. Their ancestors were wise men who lived in the land before it had become infested with alien philosophies. To Eliphaz, Job's idea that the wicked can prosper and the righteous suffer was the result of contaminated theology.
- F. Eliphaz was saying much about himself. He was actually saying that "I am not suffering because I am good." Anytime we become judgmental it is because of our own pride and self-righteousness. Ps. 10:2; Prov. 16:18.
- G. Eliphaz gives a list of all adversities that come upon sinners. Job 15:21-26. He is describing Job and implies, "If the shoe fits, wear it."
- H. Eliphaz continues describing the wicked. Job 15:27-35. Eliphaz believed the wicked would get what they deserve now in this life. He believed their prosperity was only temporary.
- I. Actually Eliphaz is saying that people live for God because He mercilessly punishes the wicked and graciously rewards the righteous. This is the very reasoning of the devil. If we serve God only for what we can get out of it, the basis of our religion is selfishness. It is only in times of adversity and suffering that we can discover our real motives for serving the Lord.
- J. In the Old Testament there is a basis for what Eliphaz said. God's basic covenant to Israel was that if they obeyed the Law, He would reward them, and if they did not, He would punish them. However, during this period the nation of Israel was in its infancy, and God dealt with them as children. Children understand rewards and punishments better than principles and morals. However, when the young nation was about to enter the Promised Land, God revealed the right motive for obedience to Him in Deut. 6:5, which the Lord quotes in Matt. 22:37.

- K. God did not give us His Law to bribe us to live righteously or to frighten us when we sin. God wants us to obey because of our love for Him. John 14:15; Rom. 13:8-10.
- L. True goodness is never motivated by what it can get out of being good.
- M. All must realize that when others suffer, the same thing might happen to us tomorrow. We must make sure the words we dish out are soft and caring because we may have to eat them another day.

II. Job's Reply. (chapters 16-17).

- A. Job's comforters turned out to be very disappointing. Job 16:2.
- B. When you go through trials and testings, do not expect your friends (Christian or non-Christian) to understand what is happening or to have just the right words to say. Probably, if you express how you feel, you will be judged or criticized. Do not judge them; instead forgive them, because they may be more confused than you are.
- C. Job's friends added to his suffering instead of easing it. Job asserts that he would have been a real comforter if he were in their place. Job 16:4.
- D. Job learned many lessons about understanding and ministering to the hurting through his own suffering. Job 16:5. Instead of making long theological speeches trying to explain the workings of God, he would be more understanding. Nowhere does the Bible tell us to try to explain why God allows certain things to happen or to judge people. We are commanded to ease the burden of sufferers. Gal. 6:2.
- E. Job did not understand why God was allowing his suffering. Job 16:6-14. It seems as though God had painted a target on him and given everyone bows and arrows to shoot at him.
- F. Job was a pitiful sight in sackcloth and much weeping. Job 16:15-17. However, through it all his motives in prayer were not selfish but pure and he was right with the Lord.
- G. Job believed death was near and he prayed that his plea for justice not be buried and forgotten. Job 16:18-17:1.
- H. The world was also judging and condemning Job. Job 17:1-6.
- I. Job's body had deteriorated and all of his plans were shattered. Job 17:7-16. The only relief Job could hope for was the grave.
- J. When a person is suffering and experiencing anguish of heart and soul they do not think logically or theologically; they are thinking emotionally. When we talk about theology to someone who is suffering, it is only a sign that we do not understand their pain.
- K. Consolation can be shared only by those who know what it is like to suffer and be consoled. II Cor. 1:3,4. Thought for meditation: God never gives away His consolation; He only loans it.
- L. When people are hurting, God does not want us to explain to them why they are suffering. He wants us to share the comfort we have experienced during the storms of life.

WHEN LIFE ISN'T FAIR

Now, the last of Job's three friends, Zophar, gives his opinion why Job is suffering such terrible adversity. Zophar also lacks compassion and kindness.

Eliphaz had accused Job of not practicing what he preached when it came to suffering. His rationalization was God always blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked. For this reason, he had to be guilty of some terrible wickedness.

Bildad accused Job of being nothing more than a bag of wind. He said that God always acts justly - and if Job had not sinned then it had to be his children. He accused Job of being a hypocrite who had forsaken God and said Job's faith was like a spider's web, offering no support in crisis. Zophar is the next friend of Job to talk.

I. Zophar's Allegations. (11:1-20)

- A. Zophar is angered that Job maintains his innocence. Job 11:23.
 1. Job had consistently denied being guilty of any evil act. However, He did not claim to be perfect. Job 7:20,21.
- B. Zophar speaks with eloquence about God's omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience in verses 7-10. In verse 11 he makes it clear that God sees through hypocrisy.
- C. Note Zophar's further comment. (Job 11:12). He is saying that dumb Job had about as much chance of becoming wise as a wild donkey has to be born tame.
- D. Some have said that Zophar's was the original prosperity preacher because of what he told Job would happen if he would only repent of his sin. Job 11:16,17.
- E. Zophar was greatly mistaken because Job's suffering was not God's punishment for his sin. Job 11:18,19. Also, it must be understood that Job's repentance would not guarantee that his life would be brighter than noonday (Never forget the importance of correct motives!)
- F. God does not guarantee His children lives of prosperity and good health. God allows no exemptions from suffering and offers no explanations when it comes. God has promised His own that He will be with us at all times. Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5,6. If through the times of adversity, testing, trial and suffering we can depend or lean wholly on Him, He will either lighten our load or He will strengthen us so we can bear it.
- G. God did not keep the three Hebrew children out of the fiery furnace, rather He got in with them. Dan. 3:26,27.
- H. Are you prepared for the "if not's" of life? Some will only serve God as long as He does as they expect. This is a severe misunderstanding of the Bible. Biblical faith keeps us from being so attached to what we want that if it doesn't happen, we will still trust God regardless. Job. 13:15, Dan. 3:18.
- I. God does not save us from adversity and suffering but does enter with us to sustain in those hours. Rom. 8:38,39. Nothing in time, space, or matter can separate us from God's love. Think of the most horrible, horrendous, terrifying thing that could ever happen to you. Even that cannot separate you from the love of God. Ps. 139:7-10.

II. Job's Answer. (12:1-14:22)

- A. Job answers, Zophar's accusations with mockery. Job. 12:2.
- B. Job's friends had spoken condescendingly to Job. It is arrogant to assume that we have all the answers and can explain why someone is suffering adversity. Job. 12:3. Zophar had reduced the working of the infinite God into the very simplistic explanation that every tragedy is manifested punishment for some sin.
- C. Job's friends all had superficial and simplistic answers to the problem of suffering and adversity. However, Job thinks much deeper and makes a statement that all those who are suffering often think about. Job 12:6.
- D. The reality of the apparent blessings on the sinful and ungodly is a fact that all must wrestle with at some point. Acts 10:34; Matt. 5:45.
- E. God gives His blessings without respect to merit or morality. Truly now let us recognize it, if they were based on merit or morality, no one would be worthy of them. In what some have called "common grace," God is indiscriminate in His blessings. His love and goodness benefits everyone, even those who are evil. II Pet. 1:3,4; Ps. 145:9.
- F. In chapter 12 Job makes it clear that the mystery of suffering is far more profound than his three friends have implied. Job 12:13. Job believed God was too big and too wise to be put into a box so He and His actions could be analyzed and explained.
- G. Job was very irritated at his friends and makes a statement that we should note if we are to comfort and help others when suffering. Job. 13:4. The word forgers means "white washers." His friends merely whitewashed Job's problems by offering shallow and traditional explanations which Job knew as well as they. Job condemned his friends for trying to defend God deceitfully and using untruth to explain things they did not understand. Job 13:7,8. They had lied about the partiality of God and the charges they made against God.
- H. Job had weak moments yet his faith was sure and established. Job 14:15.
- I. Job next addresses the brevity of life. Job 14:1-6. God wants all of us to consider the brevity of our lives and the fact that He already knows when we are going to die. Job 14:5.
- J. Job maintained his belief in the resurrection of the dead. Job 14:12. He even referred to the death of the body as sleep, as did Jesus when referring to the death of Lazarus. John 11:11.
- K. Death may come in one of two ways. Job 14:18,19. In other words, it may be sudden, as an earthquake may suddenly move part of a mountain and cause it to crumble, or death may come slowly or gradually, as water wears stones.
- L. Job still could not sort out the calamities that had struck him and he pleads for release from his suffering. Job. 14:20-22.
- M. When the three young Hebrews went through the fiery furnace, the only thing burned were their bonds. The fiery experience we are going through, or will go through, will be used to unbind us. God can take the fire of adversity and use it to rid our lives of those things that hinder and keep us from being everything we ought to be for Him. When adversity comes and life doesn't seem fair, remembering this fact may help to turn our "confusion into celebration."

PUTTING PAIN IN PERSPECTIVE

Job 18-19

We have seen that Eliphaz was more vicious in his attack on Job in his second speech than he was in the first. Job was accused of being a terrible hardened sinner who defied the counsel of God. Eliphaz's theology was simple: God punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous. Eliphaz's premise was - since Job was suffering he must be wicked, and since he was not, he obviously was good. Eliphaz, in pride, spoke for God. Bildad now follows.

I. Bildad's Denunciation of Job (chapter 18).

- A. Bildad in the first four verses of this chapter, denounces Job for rejecting his counsel and that of his two friends. They recognize they are getting nowhere with Job and accuse him of being irrational.
- B. When pride is present a person is easily offended and takes personal things that are not intended that way. Job 18:2
- C. Bildad really gets aggravated with Job and says he thinks the world and the order of things ought to be changed just to suit him.
- D. The real problem with Bildad, Eliphaz and Zophar was that they did not really understand divine retribution. Job had far more insight into the workings of God in the world than did his friends.
 - 1. Job kept insisting that the righteous do suffer and the wicked prosper.
 - 2. There is truth in what Job's friends said. Gal. 6:7.
 - 3. If you follow the principles of God's Word and count the cost before going into debt you can stay out of financial bondage.
 - 4. If you obey God's Word concerning sex and morality you will not have to worry about sexually transmitted diseases.
 - 5. If you love and minister to people as the Bible teaches, you will have the blessing of friends.
 - 6. In the same way, those who violate God's Word will suffer the natural consequences of sin in this life.
 - 7. However, full retribution will only be experienced in eternity.
- E. Bildad says that a wicked person will lose all the comforts of life and dwell in darkness and confusion just like Job. Job 18:5,6. Light and fire in Old Testament times were symbols of comfort, warmth and happiness.
- F. Bildad and his friends looked at life in the present which caused them to focus on convincing Job that wicked people suffer in a fashion equal with their sins in this life and the righteous receive full rewards in this life. Job 18:11-19.
- G. Bildad says later generations will be astonished and frightened at the completeness of the destruction of the wicked. Job 18:20,21. This was being applied directly to Job and lastly set forth that Job did not know God.

II. Job's Defense (chapter 19).

- A. Job expresses his increased irritation at his friends lack of compassion and their merciless attacks on his character. Job. 19:1-6.
- B. Job reaches his lowest point emotionally and spiritually. Job 19:6-11.

- C. The mystery of sorrow and suffering can so overwhelm any of us that it can shake our faith in a good and loving God and Father as it did Job's. Job 19:11,12. From a human perspective, what is happening to Job does not concur with his view of God. Job's frustration still revealed his strong faith in a great and good God.
- D. Job's suffering is intensified by his loneliness. Job 19:13-19.
 1. Those nearest and dearest to him had forgotten and forsaken him. Job 19:13,14.
 2. His disease had caused his breath to be offensive to his wife and made young children despise him. Job 19:17,18.
 3. Job had not one human being to stand with him in his hour of need. Job 19:19.
- E. Job describes his terrible loss of weight. Job 19:20. The phrase "escaped with the skin of my teeth" has been interpreted by some to mean that Job's body had so deteriorated that his teeth had fallen out and he had only gums with which to eat.
- F. Job wanted his story recorded permanently because he thought he was about to die. Job 19:23,24. He wanted people to know how he suffered and what he had said. (Ezek. 14:14,20; James 5:11) God did answer his prayer in placing his story complete in the canon of the Scriptures.
- G. In chapter 19, Job is seen in his lowest valley but also on his highest mountain. Job 19:25,26. This is the greatest confession of faith concerning life after death found anywhere in the Old Testament.
- H. Job's friends and relatives may desert him, but God never will, no matter how bad things presently seem. Throughout Job's terrible experience of testing and suffering his friends have falsely accused and slandered him. Regardless Job continues to believe in a Divine Redeemer who will vindicate him at last. He is fully confident that God's justice will prevail.
- I. Job had great faith through which another truth is revealed. Job expects not only to hear about but also to be a witness of his vindication and in a body. Though his body dies and rots, he will still be there in a body to see it. This is the clearest reference to belief in a bodily resurrection found anywhere in the Old Testament. Note further revelation about a bodily resurrection. John 11:23-25; I Cor. 15:54.
- J. Job did not see and understand things as a believer who has read the New Testament but he understood what faith in God is all about. Many details and the full meaning of life after death was not fully revealed until the resurrection of Christ. Now because of the resurrection of Christ we know that death is not an end; it is a beginning. Death is not a period; it is a comma. It is not the end of life; it is the expansion of life (when one really comes alive, with so many more dimensions, that cannot possibly be known until then).
- K. To reach the ultimate of consolation during times of suffering and tribulation, we must be able to say with Job, "I know." Job 19:25-27. It is not enough to say "I hope" or "I trust".
 1. Paul had suffered from imprisonment, beatings, poverty and loneliness, yet he could continue expressing his unwavering faith. II Tim. 1:12.
 2. If we are to withstand, endure, and come through suffering, trials, and persecution, we must have a deep understanding of the character of our God. It is time to take a new look at the Old Book.
- L. Let us now consider Job 19:27. "When I shall see for myself." The Hebrew word translated see (HAZAH) suggests the idea of gazing on God for all eternity with his own eyes. This may be only a part of Rom. 8:18. There will be so much to behold and experience in eternity in the presence of the Lord that all we may go through here now will be nothing in comparison. It cannot even be compared!

- M. Job warns his friends about harassing innocent people. Job 19:29; Matt. 7:1-5,12; Rom. 14:4; I Cor. 4:5.
- N. Job asked a question in Job 14:14, “If a man die, shall he live again?” He answers his own question with a resounding, echoing “yes” heard through all the annals of time. Job 19:25-27.
- O. The assurance and certainty of eternal life after death makes our present pain more bearable because things always look different in the perspective of eternity.

The Fine Art of Listening

Job 20-21

Bildad, in his second speech, was merciless in his denunciation of Job, saying in Chapter 18 that all of Job's suffering and sorrow was a result of his wickedness and sin. Bildad condemned Job for rejecting the counsel of his three friends. Job went through his deepest valley as he cried out in his own defense in confusion and agony. Job 19:6. In the same chapter Job is seen on his highest mountain of faith as he responded with a great Old Testament confession of faith concerning life after death. Job 19:25,26. After Bildad's denunciation and Job's defense follows Zophar again.

I. Zophar's Reprimand (Chapter 20)

- A. Zophar's speech was not from a cool, calm, collected mind but from a mind disturbed, angry and offended because of Job's firm, unwavering declarations of faith. Job 20:23.
- B. Zophar ??? that from the beginning of human history the experience of the wicked is clear. Job 20:4. Zophar then makes some assertions.
 - 1. The triumph of the wicked is short and the joy of the hypocrite is momentary. Job 20:5.
 - 2. Although young, the wicked will die, no matter how luxuriously he has lived. Job 20:11.
 - 3. Riches gained by the wicked will not be retained and will be used even to cause his death. Job 20:12-15. (People who break God's law are often more susceptible to an early death than those who restrain from sins.)
 - a. Those who are guilty of sexual immorality are exposed to heinous diseases.
 - b. Those who abuse alcohol and drugs are in danger of liver related diseases.
 - c. Those who rob and steal often die prematurely from violence related to their sins. (However, many wicked people live to a ripe old age, while some of God's very best people die at a tragically early age.)
 - 4. Every imaginable calamity will come upon the wicked. Job 20:23. Zophar was also making reference to the many adversities Job suffered in rapid succession. (Eccl. 8:11 contradicts Zophar's assertion.)
 - 5. Zophar sums up his affirmations in Job 20:29.

II. Job's Rebuttal (Chapter 21)

- A. It is impossible to be a good counselor without being a good listener. Job's comforters would not shut up long enough to listen. Job 21:1-5. Listening is a fine art and there are some principles that should be remembered.
 - 1. Give the hurting person time to speak and do not rush them. You earn the right to speak by listening.
 - a. We all know someone who talks too much but do we know anyone who listens too much?
 - b. How can a wise person reveal their wisdom? Prov. 10:19.
 - 2. When a hurting person is speaking, no matter how wrong they may be, do not argue or correct them.

- a. Give affirmation that you are hearing what they are saying-not that you are in agreement.
 - b. Do not act surprised at what they may say, no matter how harsh or bitter they may be.
 - c. Be very careful about responding hastily to what people are saying. Prov. 29:20.
3. A hurting person needs to vent their hurt, frustration and perhaps their anger. To do that they need someone who will listen without criticism or correction. Our ability to listen compassionately to a hurting friend will reveal as much as anything what kind of friend we are. No one feels more deserted or lonely than a person experiencing deep suffering or severe adversity. It may not be voiced, but it is not unusual to feel that even God has deserted them. Remember a true friend is "one who comes in when the world has gone out." Perhaps we may need to carefully examine and scrutinize ourselves to see if we are true friends or just "fair weather friends!"
 4. It is far more important for hurting people to speak than to hear any advice you might give them. They need to verbalize their thoughts, especially their frustrations and bitterness. When people verbalize their thoughts they are better able to analyze and evaluate them. If what they say sounds foolish to you, it probably will to them also, after they think about what they have said. Every speaker has two audiences, the person before him and himself. As a person listens to himself, wrong thoughts or feelings often take care of themselves.
 5. The frustrations of life need a vent or pop-off valve at times. Like an inflated balloon that is about to burst, the release of emotional pressure is absolutely necessary. Allowing a person to speak is the most readily available safety valve. This kind of listening requires maturity, permissiveness and great patience.
 6. If you do not understand what the person is saying, feel free to ask questions. Asking questions lets the person know you really want to hear about what they are saying.
 - a. Usually most of us are so anxious to relate our experiences or express our genius that we don't have the patience to listen to others.
 - b. When counseling hurting people there is no better time to obey the command found in James 1:19.
 7. Listening is a difficult art because it requires tremendous concentration. Most people can speak at the rate of about 120 words a minute but can think three or four times that fast. This means that listening to someone speak leaves much thinking time on our hands. It will take special effort to concentrate carefully on listening.
 8. Do not be afraid of silence. It is very difficult to keep silent when no one is talking. Ten or fifteen seconds of total silence may seem like an eternity. Breaking into periods of silence may rob a hurting person of what they need most. They may be building up courage to share something very important. Or, they may be trying to collect their thoughts so they can express them clearly.
 9. If as you listen, the hurting person breaks down and weeps, give him or her a reassuring touch of some kind. The skin is the largest organ of the body and contains millions of sensory cells and nerves. Be careful to think this out, plan and make sure your touch is appropriate and will not be misunderstood. This is

not a sexual advance but a touch that conveys a message of love and compassion.

- a. Christ used this technique in His ministry.
 - b. At least eight times we find Him touching needy people. Matt. 8:3; Mark 5:11; Matt. 10:29; Mark 8:33; 8:22,23; 10:13.
10. As you listen, look the speaker in the eye. Listening begins not with the ears but with the eyes. The eyes may tell you something the mouth does not. Prov. 20:12.
- B. Job might have been trying to awaken some compassion and sympathy in his friends when he asked them to listen carefully and put their hands over their mouths. Job 21:2-5.
 - C. Job answered Zophar's assertion that the wicked die young after much suffering. Job 21:7-9.
 - D. Job makes it clear that God's judgment is not always meted out in this life. Job 21:10-16.
 - E. Job says that the wicked may live long, healthy lives and die in prosperity. Job 21:17,23,24.
 - F. Job knew that his friends were going to ask where are the wicked people who prosper and live long lives. Job 21:27-29,31. Sometimes the wicked are so rich and powerful that no one would dare denounce them to their faces.
 - G. Job's friends could not comfort him since they knew little about the fine art of listening. Job 21:34.

WHERE IS GOD IN MY HOURS OF GREATEST NEED?

Job 22-24

Now the elder of Job's friends, Eliphaz begins his third speech or debate. Job has steadfastly claimed that he is not a secret sinner nor a hypocrite but that he was blameless, upright, one that feared God and shunned evil. Blameless does not mean that Job was perfect, but there were no outstanding faults in his character and no habitual sin in his life.

I. Eliphaz's Charges (Chapter 22)

- A. Eliphaz responds to Job's declarations that God does not always punish the wicked by asking "Can a man be profitable unto God?" He is saying, since God is too great to be benefited or disadvantaged by human actions, it is only logical that His judgment could be for no other reason than the good of the individual. Job 22:2,4. To Eliphaz, it was ridiculous that God would punish one for being righteous. Eliphaz then makes three accusations against Job.
 - 1. First Eliphaz agrees with his two friends that Job is a very wicked man. Job 22:5
 - a. Job is then accused of sins of omission. Job 22:7,9.
 - b. God, in the Old Testament commanded His people to have compassion on the needy. Ex. 22:22; Deut. 15:7.
 - c. It is just as evil not to do the good we should as it is to commit an evil act. James 4:17.
 - 2. Secondly, Eliphaz accuses Job of thinking he can hide sins from God. Job 22:13,14. He continues to assert that the wicked will be 'cut down' before their time. Job 22:16.
 - 3. Lastly, Eliphaz was sincere in his call for Job to repent with what are really excellent words of advice. Job 22:21, 22. Eliphaz's 'cut and dried' theology, his 'black and white' philosophy, could see nothing else that would be causing Job's suffering, but his own sin. Eliphaz was simply saying the right things to the wrong person.
- B. Job's friends had not yet walked in Job's shoes so were talking about things they had not yet experienced. II Cor. 1:3-7.

II. Job's Confusion (Chapters 23-24)

- A. All his suffering and adversity had confused Job because he is confident he is not guilty of any of the charges his friends have made against him.
 - 1. "Where is God that I might find Him?" Job 23:3.
 - 2. Job looked for God but could not find Him. Job 23:8.
 - 3. Job wanted to find God because he had questions to ask and a defense to present concerning his character. Job 23:12.
- B. However, as Job thinks about defending himself beforehand, he recoils from the idea. Job. 23:13-17.
- C. According to statements by Job, God's people would not become so frustrated if God had a divine calendar that He would send to all His people, noting His divine schedule for dispensing adversity. Job 24:9. Job then enumerates in detail the horrible injustices in the world.
 - 1. The stealing of the land. Job 24:2.

2. The oppression of the poor. Job 24:36.
 3. The crimes of the wicked. Job 24:10.
 4. In the midst of all these atrocities, God does yet judge them or charge them for their wrong. Job. 24:12.
- D. Job next describes the crimes of the city.
1. The murderer kills the poor and needy. Job 24:14.
 2. The adulterer sins in the darkness thinking no one sees. Job 24:15.
- E. Job is further perplexed by the fact that not only are those horrible sinners not punished but also God seemingly gives them security. Job 24:18-25 (verse 23).

III. Some Ways To React When We Cannot Get All The Answers Immediately.

- A. Do not look for someone to blame.
1. Our old nature wants to strike out at someone because we feel someone must be responsible.
 2. Usually then if we cannot find a person to blame, the next tactic is to blame God. Gen. 3:12.
 3. Insurance companies usually refer to natural catastrophes (floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, etc.) and other types of destruction as “acts of God.”
 - a. These are not necessarily “acts of God.” The world is flawed and marred by sin and under the god of this world and that is the reason horrible things happen.
 - b. God is too good to do anything bad and too wise to do anything foolish. Deut. 32:4.
 - c. Be careful about blaming others, blaming God and blaming yourself. During the time of adversity it is not important who is to blame. There may be no one to blame. It may be just a part of life in this world.
- B. Remember in time you will understand.
1. Time is marvelous healer.
 2. As humans we cannot see tragedy and suffering from the viewpoint of eternity but one day we will. I Cor. 13:12.
 3. When we see what heaven is like and the glorified bodies of our friends and loved ones there, everything will be so glorious and outshine anything we have experienced, we will not even thin to ask “Why?” Rom 8:18; II Cor. 4:17, 18.
4. God always has a purpose for everything He allows to happen to us and those we love.

My Father’s way may twist and turn,
 My heart may throb and ache,
 But in my soul I’m glad I know,
 He maketh no mistake.
 A.M. Overton

- C. Remember the past.
1. The past is a wonderful revealer of the present.
 2. When we look at the past we see God’s care of His people. Josh. 21:45; 23:14, 15; I Kings 8:56.
 3. When we look at our own past, we also can see God taking care of us. Josh. 4:5-7. (A memorial is something that reminds us how faithful God has been in the past. A memorial reminds us that if God has been faithful in the past He

will be faithful in the present. Everyone has had experiences in the past that seemed hopeless at the time, but God saw us through and uses those experiences as memorials in our lives.)

D. Remember the promises of God.

1. We may sometimes feel like the disciples who cried out to Christ during the storm on the Sea of Galilee. Mark 4:38.
2. Job is an example of what we should do when God seems to have abandoned us. (His only comfort was that he believed the promises of God.)
3. The times will come when our only comfort is the Word of God. Ps. 37:23, 24; Isaiah 40:31; Matt. 28:20b.

THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

Chapters 25-31

It has been said that “there are two kinds of speakers - those who have something to say and those who have to say something.” Job’s friends were those “who have to say something.” Though they still had to say something, it appears they had exhausted their arguments that sin was the reason for Job’s adversity. In Chapter 25, Bildad gives the last and shortest speech from Job’s three friends. He really does not answer anything neither does he present anything new. Bildad simply argues about the greatness of God and the insignificance of humans in contrast. Job 25:1-3, 6.

Beware of people who have an answer for everything and claim they can explain why God allows bad things to happen. Actually they are only revealing how little they really know Him.

I. Job’s Description Of God’s Majesty (Chapters 26-28)

- A. Job rebukes his friends for being insensitive and for being a total failure in consoling him. Job 26:4.
- B. The rest of Chapter 26 is an amazing scientifically accurate description of God’s power in the universe.
- C. Job made an astounding scientific statement in Job 26:7.
 - 1. For thousands of years all ancient scientists believed that some kind of firm base held up the earth.
 - 2. The Egyptians said the earth was held up by giant pillars, one at each corner.
 - 3. The Greeks taught that the world was balanced on the back of a giant called Atlas.
 - 4. Copernicus and Galileo in the 16th and 17th centuries announced that the world was round and suspended in space.
 - 5. However the oldest book in the Bible, the book of Job, had contained these truths at least three thousand years earlier.
- D. In Chapter 27 Job affirms his integrity and innocence in verses 1-6.
- E. In the remainder of Chapter 27 Job talks about the fate of the hypocrite and sinner.
- F. In Chapter 28 he compares mining for precious metals with the search for wisdom. Note Job’s question in Job 28:12 and his answer in Job 28:28.
- G. The fear of the Lord is not trembling horror nor a paralyzing dread but a loving awe and reverence for God. It is not a fear that paralyzes but a faith that energizes.
- H. On the other hand, pride is the greatest barrier to wisdom. It is pride that makes us think that God must explain His actions or answer our demands for understanding. Prov. 11:2.

II. Job’s Desire For The Past (Chapters 29-31)

- A. Job reminisces and gives an account of days gone by when he had prosperity and children. Job 29:2, 7.
- B. Sometime or other, all yearn to return to “the good old days.” Living in the past often seems more desirable.
 - 1. However, usually our memory plays tricks on us and we forget the hard and difficult times of the past.

2. The children of Israel were like that and forgot a lot when they complained to Moses about the present. Num. 11:5.
 3. The Israelites forgot they were slaves, did not remember making bricks without straw, the slaughter of their male babies and life under the Egyptian whip.
 4. Most people have a false, idealized memory of the past that conveniently forgets the bad.
 5. The mental and physical energy we burn up trying to turn back pages of time, yearning for what used to be, is an exercise in futility.
 6. Don't make the present seem worse than it is by comparing it with a past, censored of suffering and adversity.
- C. Job describes his present pain and humiliation in Chapter 30.
1. He was scorned by young men whose fathers were outcasts of society, unfit to help Job's dogs watch his flocks. Job 30:1.
 2. Job describes his excruciating physical pain. Job 30:17.
 3. In the midst of his humiliation and pain Job cries out to God. Job 30:20, 21.
- D. Job insists, in Chapter 31, that he has not been guilty of lusting after someone of the opposite sex. Job 31:1-4.
1. Job was not guilty of any deceit or unethical conduct. Job 31:5-6.
 2. Job was not guilty of adultery. Job 31:9-12.
 3. Job carefully examines his business life, declaring that he is innocent of abusing his wealth or power. Job 31:13-15.
 4. Job was good to the needy. Job 31:16-23.
 5. Job had no bitterness or animosity toward his enemies. Job 31:29, 30. (Matt. 5:44).
 6. Job denies almost a dozen sins and recounts his unblemished life, and then rests his case. Job 31:35.
 - a. He now apparently felt that God would break His silence and explain all his suffering.
 - b. However, God remained silent and Job still had no idea of what God was doing because he did not have a New Testament.

III. God's Purpose For Allowing Us To Suffer. Romans 8:28, 29.

- A. This verse does not say God causes everything that happens nor is everything that happens necessarily good.
- B. However, God can cause good to come out of all things.
- C. All things is inclusive, and excludes everything - our childhood experiences, our parents, our brothers and sisters, our education, or lack of it, our employment or lack of it, and even our appearance.
- D. God can take the bad things that Satan tries to use to destroy our faith and use them for good.
- E. God takes life's distasteful experiences, puts them in the right context and perspective, and through this conforms us to the image of His Son.
- F. In the heat of adversity it is very important to remember that God is far more concerned with improving our character than in improving our circumstances.
- G. God's goal in this life is not to make us comfortable but to conform us to the image of His Son. I Peter 1:7.
- H. God takes the bad that comes to us and transforms it into benefits that cannot be measured. Gen. 50:20.

- I. The events of life may seem tangled, meaningless, and sometimes even cruel. They appear that way because of the side we see them from - the underside. When we see life from God's side, His love and providence shine through. Remember, it depends on your viewpoint as to what you see.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT

Chapters 32-35

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, Job's friends, who he thought had come to console and comfort him, instead came to scold and condemn. As someone had said, "they had the bedside manner of a drill sergeant and the compassion of a chain saw killer." It appears that a crowd had gathered to listen to all the debates. Probably these were the most respected and successful leaders in the area.

A man by the name of Elihu emerged from the crowd, angry at Job, and the three friends as well. Job 32:2, 3. Elihu had waited out of respect because all were older than him. Job 32:4. Apparently he wanted to hear all the debate and then became furious at all. Job 32:5. Elihu appears to be conceited because of his condescending attitude toward his elders. Job 32:9. He says that Job really did better at answering than the three friends but Job had not taken him on yet. Job 32:11-14.

However, for the most part Elihu was a sincere and compassionate young man who wanted to help Job understand his suffering. Job 32:21-22.

I. Elihu's Challenge To Job (Chapter 33)

- A. Elihu politely asks for attention and before beginning his speech assures Job that his words were properly motivated. Job 33:1, 3.
- B. Elihu assures Job that he is a mere mortal and that Job could respond without fear. Job 33:6, 7. Apparently Elihu did not want a monologue but a dialogue where Job could respond.
- C. The fact that Elihu is more compassionate and personal in his speech shows in the fact that twice he called Job by name. Job 33:1, 31.
 - 1. Job's three friends never mentioned Job's name.
 - 2. Remember when ministering to a hurting person that it is important to talk to them personally.
 - 3. It is very important when talking to someone who is hurting to call them by name. (That lets them know you are thinking of them, not just their situation or another impersonal thing.)
- D. In Job 33:8-11 Elihu lets Job know he has been listening carefully to what Job has said.
- E. Elihu as a model speaker gives the premise for his speech and then a thesis statement. Job 33:12-14.
 - 1. Elihu addresses not the issue of job's guilt or innocence but his frequent complaint - that God would not grant him a hearing to defend himself. Job 9:16, 35; 13:22; 19:17; 23:2-7.
 - 2. God's ways and methods of working are often beyond human ability to comprehend. Isaiah 55:9.
- F. In the rest of the chapter Elihu says that God speaks to us in at least two ways.
 - 1. Dreams were a primary way that God spoke to His messengers in the Old Testament. Job 33:15-18. (That is not how God speaks today.)
 - a. Hebrews 1:1, 2 should be clear!

- b. God's inspired, written Word is His complete message to us today. II Tim. 3:16, 17.
- 2. The second way, according to Elihu, that God speaks to us is through suffering.
 - a. "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to our conscience, but shouts in our pain." C.S. Lewis.
 - b. God does use pain in our lives. James 1:3, 4.
 - (1). God uses pain to develop patience.
 - (2). Patience develops the strength of character needed to live for God.
 - (3). There is a saying among seamen, "No sailor ever distinguished himself on a smooth sea."
 - (4). It takes storms to bring out human character and greatness.
 - (5). Character never comes to the surface amid comfort and ease.
 - c. God uses suffering to develop humility.
 - (1). Problems knock a lot of arrogance out of us. Job 33:66.
 - (2). Suffering helps us remember our frailty and need of total dependence on the Lord. II Cor. 12:9.
- 3. Elihu closes this part of his speech by inviting Job to speak and if not, to continue to listen carefully. Job 33:32, 33.

II. The Justice And Sovereignty Of God (Chapters 34-35)

- A. Elihu had respect for Job and his friends and appeals to them to gain their attention. Job 34:2, 3.
- B. Elihu quotes Job's claim that God was unfair in causing a righteous man like him to suffer and that there is no profit in living for God. Job 34:9.
- C. Elihu says that if God is unjust, then He is not God. Job 34:10.
- D. In the remainder of the chapter Elihu defends God's justice. Job 34:12-19.
- F. Elihu was shocked that Job would have the audacity to criticize God and counsels him to stop criticizing God. Job 34:36-37. (Job is advised to repent of such rebellious remarks.)
- G. Throughout Chapter 35 Elihu defends the sovereignty of God.
 - 1. Actually the entire book of Job is about the sovereignty of God.
 - 2. From the very first chapter it is obvious that God is in control, for He tells Satan what he can and cannot do.
 - 3. More than thirty times in the book of Job God is called Almighty, which means "all powerful."
 - 4. Elihu is right: God does no wrong and is sovereign.
- H. Elihu is clearly perturbed at Job's claim that neither his righteousness nor sin made any difference. Job 35:5-7.
 - 1. In rebuttal Elihu pleads with his listeners to consider how much higher God is than humanity.
 - 2. God is not affected adversely by sin or benefited by good deeds and righteousness. (God is simply beyond the capacity of human ability to affect Him one way or the other).
- I. Elihu contradicted Job when he said that the cry of the oppressed and suffering went unheard by God, and that therefore God was unconcerned. Job 35:10.
 - 1. God places hope in our hearts no matter how dark the night.
 - 2. Note this truth demonstrated in Acts 16:24, 25.
- J. Elihu now points out a very important principle of prayer. Job 35:9.

1. When people are in trouble they do cry out to God for help, but they are often only looking for a way out, not a way of life.
 2. Elihu presented important truth about this fact in Job 35:13.
 3. God does not respond to empty, insincere calls for help.
 4. One cannot plea bargain with God.
 5. One cannot demand God to explain Himself.
- K. We may not be able to see God or His justice in the suffering and adversity of life. Job 35:14.
1. It does not matter whether we can see or not! Job 35:16.
 2. The important thing is that God does see us and His justice and sovereignty can be seen.
 3. Here there must be patience, faith and waiting on the Lord.
- L. Our God is a God who can give songs in the night.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was the most famous American poet of his day and a Professor of literature at Harvard University. One Christmas day he sat in his study, distressed, grieving and totally broken-hearted because he had just received word that his son had been critically wounded at Gettysburg. As he sat there he heard a nearby church playing Christmas carols. In this setting he wrote:

I heard the bells on Christmas day
 Their old familiar carols play,
 And wild and sweet the words repeat
 Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head;
 "There is no peace on earth," I said,
 "For hate is strong, and mocks the song
 Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep,
 "God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
 The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
 With peace on earth, good will to men."

Till ringing, singing, on it's way,
 The world revolved from night to day
 A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
 Of peace on earth, good will to men.

PSALMS 23

Jehovah-jireh	(The Lord will provide)	“I shall not want.”
Jehova-rapha	(The Lord that healeth)	“He restoreth my soul.”
Jehovah-shalom	(The Lord our peace)	“He leadeth me beside the still waters.”
Jehovah-tsidkenu	(The Lord our righteousness)	“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.”
Jehovah-shammah	(The Lord ever-present)	“I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.”
Jehovah-nissi	(The Lord our banner)	“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.”
Jehovah-racah	(The Lord my shepherd)	“The Lord is my shepherd.”

GOD IS GREAT

Chapters 36-41

In the last lesson Elihu, a new character, entered into the debate between Job and his three friends. Elihu had listened patiently to all the debate, and when all had exhausted their arguments, Elihu began to speak. He was disappointed and upset with Job because Job had accused God of unfairly punishing him. He was also angered at Job's friends because they really had no answer yet they condemned Job. Job 32:3.

Elihu, in chapters 32-35, though conceited gives a very good speech reminding Job of God's infinite justice, power, and righteousness, as well as how God speaks and how His ways are above our ways. Elihu reminds Job that God can give songs in the night. Job 35:10.

I. Elihu Magnifies God's Greatness. Chapters 36-37.

- A. Elihu is so full of ideas, he wants to share that he asks Job to bear with him a little longer. Job 36:2, 3.
- B. Elihu tries to comfort Job by saying, God who is perfect in knowledge, is with him. Job 36:4b.
 - 1. Elihu continues saying that no matter what life may bring God does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous. Job 36:7.
 - 2. Elihu sets forth that God uses adversity for disciplinary instruction so that they will turn from iniquity. Job 36:10b.
 - 3. Elihu then says that one's response to God's voice through suffering will determine whether a person will spend their days in prosperity and years in pleasure. Job 36:11.
 - 4. If one ignores God's warning through adversity they will die in their youths. Job 36:14a. (Thus Elihu agrees with Job's three friends.)
- C. Elihu tells Job that some day he would understand his adversity and that he should not have longed to plead his case before God. Job 36:16-21.
- D. Elihu preached that Job should learn the lesson of submission God was teaching him through affliction. Job 36:20, 21.
- E. Elihu pleads for Job to get a vision of the greatness of God. Job 36:26. God's greatness is incomprehensible and His years are eternal.
- F. In the remainder of the chapter Elihu elaborates on God's greatness as revealed in nature. Job 36:27-33.
 - 1. Job also believed in the greatness of God. Job 26:7, 12.
 - 2. Elihu pointed out that being aware of God's greatness and then criticizing Him was inconsistent.
 - 3. We cannot praise the greatness of God one day and then question His goodness the next.
- G. Elihu reminds Job of how God shows His greatness through His awesome light and sound show. Job 37:1-5.
 - 1. Elihu points out the greatness of God as displayed in nature as he continues to expound on the awesome display of god's power. Job 37:6-13.

2. These passages reveal amazing, scientifically correct observations that Elihu began in chapter 36, including precipitation and evaporation of water, the clouds as reservoirs of moisture.
- H. Job is admonished to think about his limitations compared to the knowledge, power and wondrous works of God. Job 37:14, 15.
- I. If Job was unable to understand these every day wonders in nature, how could he possibly dare to present his case before God in a legal battle, as he had pleaded to do. Job 37:20.
- J. Job was urged to see God as Almighty and perfect in justice and to prove he is wise in heart by worshipping God even though he did not understand what God was doing in his life. Job 37:23, 24. **Note Prov. 24:10**
 1. Every thing Elihu said was not right, but he was far more on target than Job's other friends.
 2. He did not claim that Job was a sinner as the other three had, but he rebuked Job for his attitudes.
 3. Job was letting his suffering cause him to become bitter and self-righteous, which was wrong.
 4. In this Elihu was correct.

II. The Lord's First Challenge. 38:1-40:5.

- A. God began to speak to Job and presented 89 questions, none of which Job could answer. Job 38:1-3.
 1. Job was not present when God created the world or determined its dimensions, how could he hope to advise God. Job 38:4, 5.
 2. Next God asks Job about the seas, whose limits were determined by Him. Job 38:8-11.
 3. God asks Job if he had ever told the sun what to do. Job 38:12.
 4. God continues to put Job in his place by asking if he had entered the depth of the sea or explored its depths. Job 38:16.
 5. God questions Job about the origin of light and how it is diffused. Job 38:18, 19.
- B. By use of questions the Lord takes Job on a journey to impress on him the splendor, the order, and the awesomeness of creation, and of God's continuing control of it. **Note Deut. 4:35.**
 1. Job needed to be reminded that God is God and there is none to compare with Him.
 2. No man has the right to question God.
- C. God returns to the animal kingdom and asks him if he knows how they live, reproduce, how they protect and feed themselves, as well as take care of their young. **Note. Ps. 145:16.**
- D. God rebukes Job and asks him if he has nay right to question or correct Him about worldly affairs that Job clearly knows little about. Job 40:2.
- E. Job got the message. Job 40:4.

III. The Lord's Second Challenge. 40:6-41:34.

- A. God presents a barrage of questions designed to help Job put things in perspective.

1. Job's presumptuous appeal to contend with God in a court of law suggests an assumed equality with God. Job 40:8.
 2. God challenges Job to play the part of God. Job 40:9, 10.
 3. God next selects two creatures, and points out that if Job is not wise enough to control them, how could he possibly give advise concerning the universe. Job 40:15; 41:1.
- B. Job learned that God is not his equal.
1. If Job could not understand creation, how could he give God suggestions as to how He might improve the way He runs things.
 2. If we cannot understand the creation, we certainly cannot understand the infinite God who spoke it into being and upholds it.
- C. The work of God's hands should be a testimony to us. Ps. 19:1.
- D. God is reflected in all of His works. Rom. 1:20.

THE REST OF THE STORY

Job 42

God began to speak to Job out of a storm as Elihu was concluding his presentation. Job 38:1-3. God then asked 89 questions concerning His creation and the operation of it, none of which Job could answer. Though these questions Job realized that his challenge to contend with God in a court of law was presumptuous.

I. Job's Changed Attitude. Job 42.

- A. Job has a new understanding of the greatness and sovereignty of God. Job 42:2.
- B. Job is overwhelmed and confesses his ignorance of God. Job 42:2, 3.
- C. Job knew about God but now has a new revelation of God's greatness, power and sovereignty. Job 42:5.
- D. Always when God is seen and understood, there is a new understanding of one's self. Job 42:6; Isaiah 6:1-5.
 - 1. Job has questioned God's actions and justice, and that called for a change of mind on Job's part.
 - 2. Here is seen the meaning of the word repent - a change of mind.
- E. After Job's confession of repentance, God reprimands Eliphaz and his 2 friends for misrepresenting Him. Job 42:7.
 - 1. They had insisted that suffering is a result of God's punishment for sin.
 - 2. This is not always true, and Job is a case in point.
- F. God commands the three friends of Job to offer seven bulls and seven rams as a burnt offering. Job 42:8. (This was a huge sacrifice and may have been a lesson about their sin of misrepresenting God.)
- G. Job forgave them and prayed for his friends. Job 42:10.
- H. It appears that God's blessings upon Job were not dependent just upon repentance but also upon his forgiving those who had wronged him.
- I. The Lord blessed Job greatly. Job 42:10.
 - 1. to have the full blessing of God upon our life we must not only confess all sin to God but also forgive and pray for those who have wronged us.
 - 2. When we refuse to forgive, we hurt ourselves the most and our relationship with the Lord.
- J. Job's friends and family came for fellowship and brought money for a new start. Job 42:11.
- K. God blessed Job with double the possessions of before, as well as ten more children, plus doubled the length of his life. Job 42:12-17.
 - 1. This does not necessarily mean that all adversity will have a happy ending like Job's because often it does not.
 - 2. We do need to learn however that God always writes the final chapter, but it may not be until we get to heaven. Heb. 11:39.
 - 3. The book of Job reveals that God uses the pain of his children for some definite purpose.

III. There Are At Least Nine Reasons Why God Allows Us To Experience Adversity.

- A. First, it causes the Bible to take on new meaning.

- B. Second, adversity often inspires others to have more faith. II Cor. 1:6.
- C. Third, adversity makes us more compassionate toward others who are hurting. II Cor. 1:4.
- D. Fourth, adversity causes us to reexamine our priorities. James 4:14.
- E. Fifth, adversity accelerates spiritual growth. Mark 4:35-41.
- F. Sixth, adversity makes us humble. II Cor. 1:9.
- G. Seventh, adversity can make heaven more attractive. II Cor. 1:9.
- H. Eighth, adversity may be redemptive. Ps. 119:67.
 - 1. Suffering may prepare hearts for the Gospel.
 - 2. Many believers return to the Lord because of trials and suffering.
 - 3. As someone has said, "Some people never look up until they are flat on their backs."
- I. Ninth, adversity builds character. Rom. 5:3, 4.
 - 1. Sometimes such things as pride and arrogance are never recognized until there is suffering.
 - 2. Sometimes adversity spotlights attitudes and sins that hinder our spiritual usefulness and need to be removed. John 15:2.

CONFOUNDED BY THE CULTS

by David C. Lewis

In the past few months, at least two regional governments within the Russian Federation have passed legislation restricting missionary activity. Despite claims by religious groups that the new legislation is unconstitutional, the restrictions have been introduced in the Sverdlovsk region - a major industrial area in the central Urals - and in the Udmurt Republic, which lies a little to the west of the Ural mountains.

Such measures are part of a bigger trend. "In religious freedom, as in many other areas of life, Russia is to a large extent a lawless state," Lawrence Uzzell of the Keston News Service recently told the U. S. Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In Washington, D. C., Uzzell told the commission that Russia's constitutional guarantee of religious liberty "has turned out to be largely meaningless in practice."

The Institute for East-West Christian Studies, part of Wheaton College's Billy Graham Center, counts 20 regions implementing or contemplating such restrictions. Both the Sverdlovsk region and the Udmurt Republic would have introduced such laws last spring but for the opposition of religious organizations. Thanks to the new restrictions, some Protestant churches in Udmurtia are no longer allowed to use public buildings for religious purposes. They have lodged an appeal with the regional procurator, who will decide whether the laws violate the Constitution.

Meanwhile, several churches have had to find new meeting places. The "Philadelphia" church - a leading evangelical fellowship in the region's capital, Izhevsk - has moved from spacious rented premises to a hall seating only 600 people, which is insufficient. The church's Bible school is continuing, but even before the restrictions became law a television station decided a planned feature was "too risky."

Ironically, the new laws initially caused some curious non-Christians to visit the churches to find out why they had been banned. In the longer-term, however, the uncertainties about their legal status and the lack of a secure meeting place are likely to discourage some Christians from attending.

In the Sverdlovsk region, all missionaries must register and provide documents on the nature of their organization, a "description of their rituals and ceremonies and other religious actions," a copy of their "holy book" or "code of laws," and other such details. One restriction forbids mission work among children (particularly those in state schools, orphanages, or kindergartens) without their consent and the written permission of their parents or legal guardians.

The Sverdlovsk regional Department of Justice may refuse to register missionaries on several grounds. A mission can be banned if it is deemed to damage the "Physical, mental, and moral health of people" or lead to the breakup of families or the erosion of family unity. Missions may also be outlawed on charges of stirring up ethnic or religious discord, using drugs, propagation violence, or using "unlawful compulsion."

The region's recent exposure to a number of sects and cults is one motivation for these strictures. By 1995, representatives of the Unification Church in Yekaterinburg had already visited many of the city's schools, where their doctrines had apparently begun to have more influence among both staff and pupils than the teachings of any other religious group.

The Department for Religious Affairs of Yekaterinburg's city council was also concerned about teachings being promoted by an organization referred to locally as the "Hubbard college," and the widespread dissemination of books by L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology. Authorities were naturally suspicious of the flood of new religious movements into Russia, including cults and sects.

Some academic papers about the psychological damage caused by certain cults have reinforced this suspicion. Pavel Bak, a respected Pentecostal minister in Yekaterinburg, was barely able to prevent a film that makes superficial comparisons between the cults and certain charismatic churches from being shown at a conference in the city.

Media reports about the activities of extreme religious cults elsewhere, either in Russia or the West, have kept fears warm. Former Communist Party officials who had always been taught to distrust religion understandably began to feel that their fears had been confirmed.

Precedents for some of these restrictions had already been set. In November, 1993, the use of public buildings for religious purposes had been banned in Kazan and Baberenzhnye Chelny, the two principal cities of Tatarstan. Tatarstan (in the region of the Volga and Kama Rivers) shares a border with Udmurtia, where similar restrictions were introduced in 1996. The Tatarstan legislation was prompted by two factors: complaints by Tatar Muslim families whose children had been converted to Protestant Christianity and the activities in Kazan of a kind of "Christian cult" that had developed a bad reputation for disturbing the public peace through its aggressive "evangelism." (Members had become known as the group that "shouts at people on public transport.")

Few in the region, brought up on atheistic propaganda, understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy forms of religion.

ISRAEL AND RELIGION

Israel's national legislature has given preliminary approval to what some critics are labeling an "anti-missionary" bill. The law, which has yet to receive final passage, would outlaw the printing and distribution of religious materials that had the purpose of persuading people to change their religion. The proposed law provides for one year of imprisonment for violators.

CRACKDOWN IN VIETNAM

Since last June, the Vietnamese government has turned up the pressure on the country's illegal house churches. Thirteen known house church leaders are in a jail, serving a minimum of 20 months in each. In addition, authorities have begun raiding churches, arresting entire congregations for short periods. Also, fines are being increased. The government is attempting to make the house churches register under Vietnam's official Protestant church, known as Tin Lanh. "We must force all illegal churches to register under the Tin Lanh churches," an official of the Ministry of Socialism and Culture. "If not, we will destroy all of them. We should use every means to intimidate them until they join."

U.S. PRESSES SAUDIS ON RIGHTS

The United States government is urging officials in Saudi Arabia to allow American citizens freedom of worship in the country, Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck told reporters. "We have been very concerned and have raised both privately and publicly the issue of freedom of religion, and particularly the question of the free exercise of religion by United States personnel when they are in Saudi Arabia," Shattuck said. We are going to press to make sure this is possible in the future as well." The most recent human rights report of the U. S. State Department noted that freedom of religion "does not exist" in Saudi Arabia, where all non-Muslim religious activities are banned.

CHURCHES ATTACKED IN PAKISTAN

A Muslim mob in Pakistan attacked churches in two Christian villages on February 6. The violence began after a mosque in Khanewal, some 200 miles south of Lahore, charged Christians with an act of desecration. Some 5,000 Christian homes were burned, and three churches were raided in Khanewal. In addition, a hospital, a hostel, and a dispensary run by the Salvation Army were attacked. Two Muslims were killed by police while some 100 Christians were hospitalized during the violence.

ZAIRE REFUGEES THREATENED

The refugee camp in Tingi Tingi, Zaire, home of 120,000 ethnic Hutus from Rwanda and Burundi, may soon fall into rebel hands. Aid workers believe that if the refugees are uprooted again, many will die. "The people who made it to this point are already survivors," a relief official with the United Nations Children's Fund said. "But if they have to suddenly get up and move again, you can say good-bye to a lot of these people. They are weak, and it will be the end of the road for them."

THE GLOBAL WAR ON CHRISTIANS

For too long we've ignored this campaign of terror

By Ralph Kinney Bennett

In China's Henan Province, 36-year-old Zhang Xiuju was dragged from her home one night by police. When the police returned her lifeless, battered body, they claimed Xiuju had died accidentally when she jumped from a car.

In Pakistan, Munir Khokher was wounded by a gunshot when he tried to stop the destruction of a Christian cemetery by Muslim mobs.

In Bangladesh, when Marzina Begum and her family would not celebrate a Muslim holiday, the villagers beat her husband, breaking his leg.

You haven't heard of these people. They are but drops of water in a vast sea of victims - men, women and children who have been tortured, imprisoned and executed. Their crime? They are Christians.

Never before have so many Christians been persecuted for their beliefs. An estimated 200 million to 250 million Christians are at risk in countries where such incidents occur.

"We are not talking about mere discrimination," says Nina Shea, director of the Puebla Program on Religious Freedom, "but real persecution - torture, enslavement, rape, imprisonment, forcible separation of children from parents."

Until recently, such cases were given scant attention by the news media and were largely ignored by most human-rights organizations, the federal government, even U.S. churches. But now, two important new books are helping to force the issue into the open: Nina Shea's *In the Lion's Den* and *Their Blood Cries Out* by Paul Marshall, a senior fellow at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto.

Other examples of persecution: In China, thousands have been sentenced to "re-education camps" for attending prayer meetings or Bible lessons. Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin, 64, who had already spent 15 years in prison for his priestly activities, was re-arrested last spring by authorities apparently intent on preventing a pilgrimage, which he helped organize, in honor of the Virgin Mary. He is now missing.

The British newspaper *The Observer* reported that in Cairo, Egypt, a teen-age Coptic Christian girl was kidnapped by Muslim extremists who forced her to fast, pray and memorize parts of the Koran. During her nine-month captivity, she was raped repeatedly. Her captors poured sulfuric acid on her wrist to obliterate a tattoo of the cross, and threatened to pour it on her face if she removed the Islamic veil they forced her to wear. Terrorized, she signed papers of conversion to Islam, then escaped and was sheltered by a group called Servants of the Cross.

Marshall notes that, contrary to perceptions held by secular and Christian Americans alike, "most Christians are not white. Christianity was in Africa before Europe, India before England, China before America. Three-fourths of all Christians live outside the West. It may be the largest Third World religion."

Both authors examine in detail the two most implacable foes of Christianity.

Muslim Militants.: In some Islamic countries, such as Jordan, officials are tolerant of other religions. But in others, Islam's Shari's laws, derived from the Koran and sometimes part of the legal code, "are used to invoke discrimination, repression and outright persecution against Christians," Marshall says. No nation illustrates this more brutally than the Sudan.

Since 1989 the Sudanese government has been engaged in a wholesale war against Christians, who constitute roughly one-fifth of the population. Marshall reports that the goal of the ruling National Islamic Front led by Hassan Al-Turabi - who some consider the country's de facto leader - is to eradicate non-Islamic religion."

In the North, Al-Turabi's forces control the necessities of life. "Non-Muslims are given the choice of converting to Islam or being denied food, clothing and shelter," Marshall says. Thousands of women and children have been sold into slavery to Muslim masters who force them to convert to Islam.

Sudan's Nuba Mountains, where Christians have lived since the sixth century, are now a wasteland of mass graves, destroyed villages and camps filled with starving women and children. Half a million Nuba Christians, virtually all men, have been killed in the past decade. "The word *genocide* is thrown around to frequently," says Marshall. "In the case of Sudan, however, it is a factual description."

American ally Saudi Arabia is another country where, Shea says, "freedom of religion simply does not exist." All citizens must be Muslims. Expressions of Christianity - wearing a cross, reading a Bible or uttering a non-Muslim prayer - are prohibited.

The *Mutawwa'in*, the Saudi religious police, search out hidden church services among the millions of Filipinos, Koreans, Indians and other foreign workers. In December 1992 two Filipino Christians, allegedly arrested for preaching Christianity, were sentenced to death on Christmas Day. After an international outcry, the sentence was commuted to deportation.

Communist Oppressors. The collapse of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European client states shook China's leaders, who noted the church's role in fostering the collapse. According to a Puebla Program report, China's state-run press, referring to Christianity, proclaimed, "IF China does not want such a scene to be repeated in its land, it must strangle the baby while it is still in the manger."

This chilling pronouncement ignores the fact that Christianity has been rooted in China since the seventh century. It survived even Mao Zedong's 27 years of fierce repression, which culminated in the Cultural Revolution of 1966 -76, when countless Christians and other believers were executed. "It was probably one of the largest intense persecutions of Christians in history," Marshall writes

Many of China's estimated 40 million Christians still worship in fear. They rise on Sunday at 3a.m. to make their way to secret worship centers in the homes of evangelists. Police roam the countryside seeking out those "house churches." In Xinjiang Province, police burst in and found 17 worshipers. When five women admitted they were the leaders, they were detained, beaten and tortured.

Life for China's Christians has taken a turn for the worse since 1995, when Ye Xiaowen, whom Marshall describes as "a prominent atheist and Communist hard-liner," was placed in charge of the government's Religious Affairs Bureau. Last year a Catholic priest, the Rev. Charles Guo Bole, was convicted of illegal evangelical work, including "organizing Bible classes" and "establishing underground evangelical church centers." He was sentenced to two years of imprisonment at a *laogai*, a reform-through-labor camp. Four Catholic bishops are also being held in the Chinese *laogai*.

The Shea and Marshall books are helping to rouse a growing chorus to join what had been a handful of voices raised on behalf of persecuted Christians. Chief among those early voices was a Jewish lawyer, Michael Horowitz, senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a think tank based in Indianapolis and Washington, D.C.

"Why a Jew? Why me?" Horowitz is quick to answer his own questions: "It may be easier for me to see the eerie parallels between what is happening to Christian communities today and what happened to my people during much of Europe's history," he says. And he is grateful for the way American Christians joined with the Jewish community in the campaign to free Soviet Jews.

That's why he was shocked by the silence of U.S. Christians in the face of worldwide persecution. "I didn't understand how the American Christian community, so vociferous, so committed to ending the suffering of Jews in the Soviet Union, could have been so mute, so tongue-tied, on behalf of its own."

Then Horowitz realized that some people had never heard the message. And some in the human-rights community and among the intellectual, media and political elites had such a misinformed view of Christianity that they were blind to the problem.

The U.S. government has also shown a lack of understand. Nina Shea recalls when she and others briefed the Clinton Administration's new ambassador to China, former Tennessee Sen. James Sasser. He revealed extensive knowledge of human-rights problems in China. But when asked about the perilous situation of Christians meeting in secret house churches throughout China., the puzzled ambassador responded, "What's a house church?"

Shea says, "China is the litmus test. If our government means to take the assault on Christians seriously, it must deal with China." But she isn't hopeful. Despite several Congressional proclamations bemoaning the persecution, the China lobby - pushing for increased trade - has thus far proved too powerful.

The White House answered Christian human-rights activists by forming the Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad. "It is a slow and cumbersome mechanism," says Shea, who was named to the panel.

But there are signs that the government is reacting to growing grassroots pressure as more Americans become aware of the persecution. Legislation has been introduced by Sen. Arlen Specter (R., Pa.) and Rep. Frank Wolf (R., Va.) that would create a White House position to monitor levels of religious persecution and have the power to impose sanctions against offending countries.

A board of Christian leaders is organizing an International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, set for November 16. "If tens of thousands of churches engage in an interdenominational effort," Horowitz says, "we'll send the world's tyrants a message they can't ignore. And Washington won't be able to ignore it either."

REPRINTED FROM THE AUGUST 1997 ISSUE OF READER'S DIGEST.

THE RUSSIAN BIBLE SOCIETY

BIBLE JOURNAL

October-December 1977

When the Iron Curtain was dismantled in the early 1990's and missionaries were welcomed into the crumbling Soviet Union, many observers feared that the window of opportunity would be short lived. This fall the parliament of Russia, largest of the Soviet republics, passed a law which President Boris Yeltsin signed, effectively closing that window to the gospel in Russia.

RESTRICTIVE NEW LAW

The law restricts activities of all religious groups who have not been continually present in the country for 15 years or more. They are not allowed to hold services, own property, distribute religious literature or invite foreigners to preach.

Primary driving force behind the law was the Russian Orthodox Church which held the Russian people in spiritual bondage for centuries. Like Roman Catholicism, they teach wafer worship, pray to Mary and maneuver to dominate the government as a tool to eliminate the free spreading of the gospel. During the communist era many of the Russian Orthodox security policy (KGB) to root out all Bible believers.

FOUR RECOGNIZED RELIGIONS

The new law officially recognizes only four religious groups: Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and "Christianity" (Primarily the Russian Orthodox brand). Even Roman Catholics are not included. An Associated Press report stated that the legislation "enshrines Russia's conservative orthodox Church as the country's preeminent religion." This puts the law in direct violation of the Russian constitution which declares: "Religious organizations are separated from state and equal before the law."

The ink was hardly dry before local provinces began sending letters to outlawed organizations canceling their registration. In Noginsk, 30 miles northwest of Moscow a Ukrainian Orthodox cathedral was confiscated and given to the Russian Orthodox church. Even in far away Siberia a Lutheran congregations' registration was revoked. Their adult Bible study groups, youth education programs, and an aid program for the poor must now be shut down.

RESTRICTIONS STARTED

The local officials had apparently anticipated the new federal law and 26 of Russia's 89 regions had already passed legislation restricting "nontraditional" religions before the new law was signed by Yeltsin. In another Siberian city Baptist missionaries must now have their sermons reviewed and certified by a government appointed "translator" before preaching.

In view of the fact that half the Russian people claim they are Russian Orthodox, but only one percent attend regularly; it is no mystery why returning missionaries tell of deep hunger by the people for spiritual truth.

RUSSIAN MISTRUST OF ORTHODOXY

Most Russians have developed a deep mistrust of the Orthodox leadership who has won permission from the Kremlin to export oil and import alcohol, tobacco and lingerie duty free which it sells for its own profit. Church members complain that the money is rarely used to build

and restore churches or increase services but goes into the pockets of a few super rich Patriarchal leaders.

PLEASE PRAY

The scenario is all too familiar in history. The rich and powerful Pharisees pressure the civil government to eliminate any threat to the control of their spiritual slaves. Jesus was crucified in an attempt to eliminate that threat. Over the centuries, Roman Catholicism has fine tuned the procedure from the Spanish Inquisition to modern day Latin America. Now we are seeing the same old pattern in Russia demonstrating again that these huge organizations of idol worshippers cannot possibly be Christians. Pray for the faithful Bible believers who must now go back underground to spread the gospel.

Used by permission from "Battle Cry", published by Chick Publications, P.O. Box 662, Chino, CA 91708, November/December, 1997

THIS THING IS FROM ME

My child, I have a message for you today; let me whisper it in your ear, that it may gild with glory any storm clouds which may arise, and smooth the rough places upon which you may have to tread.

It is short - only five words - but let them sink into your inmost soul; use them as a pillow upon which to rest your weary head:

“THIS THING IS FROM ME”

Have you ever thought of it, that all that concerns you, concerns ME, too? For “he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye.” (Zech. 2:8).

I would have you learn, when temptations assail you and the “enemy comes in like a flood,” *that this thing is from me*; that your weakness needs My might, and your safety lies in letting Me fight for you.

Are you in money difficulties? Is it hard to make both ends meet? *This thing is from me*, for I am your purse-bearer, and would have you draw from and depend upon Me. My supplies are limitless. (Phil 4:19). I would have you prove my promises. Let it not be said of you, “In this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God.” (Deut. 1:32).

Are you in difficult circumstances, surrounded by people who do not understand you, who never consult your taste, who put you in the background? *:This thing is from Me.*” I am the God of circumstances. “Thou camest not to thy place by accident; it is the very place God meant for thee.: Have you not asked to be made humble? See, then, I have placed you in the very school where this lesson is taught; your surroundings and companions are only working out My will.

Are you passing through a night of sorrow? “*This thing is from Me.*” I am the “Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” I have let earthly comforters fail you, that, by turning to Me, you may obtain everlasting consolation. (II Thess. 2:16, 17).

Has some friend disappointed you? One to whom you opened out your heart? I have allowed this disappointment to come, that you may learn that:

“The best friend to have is Jesus;
He will hear you when you call,
He will keep you lest you fall,
The best friend to have is Jesus.”

I want to be your Confidant. Has someone repeated things about you that are untrue? Leave them to Me, and draw closer to Me, thy shelter out of reach of “the strife of tongues,” for “I will bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noonday.”(Psalm 37:6).

Have your plans been upset? Are you bowed down and weary? *This thing is from Me.* You made *your* plans, then came asking *Me* to bless them; but I would have you let Me plan for you, and then I take the responsibility; for “This thing is too heavy for thee, thou are not able to perform it thyself alone. (Ex. 18:18). You are only an instrument, not an agent.

Have you longed to do some great work for Me, and instead been laid aside on a bed of pain and weakness? This thing is from Me. I could not get your attention in your busy days, and I want to teach you some of My deepest lessons. “They also serve who only stand and wait.” I want you to learn to sing:

‘I am not eager, bold, or strong,
All that is past;
I am ready not to do
At last!
At last!

Some of My greatest workers are those shut out from active service, that they may learn to wield the weapon of all prayer. Are you suddenly called upon to occupy a difficult and responsible position? Launch out on Me. I am trusting you with “the possession of difficulties,” and for “This thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works and in all thou putteth thy hands unto.” (Deut. 15:10).

This day I place in your hands this pot of holy oil; make use of it freely, my child. Let every circumstance as it arises, every word that pains you every interruption that would make you impatient, every revelation of you own weakness, be anointed with it! Remember, “Interruptions are Divine instructions.” The sting will go as you learn to see Me in all things. Therefore “Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, for it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life, and through “this thing” ye shall prolong your days in the land.” (Deut. 32:46,47).

By Laura A. Barter Snow

OTHERS MAY...YOU CANNOT

If God has called you to be really like Jesus He will draw you into a life of crucifixion and humility, and put upon you such demands of obedience, that you will not be able to follow other people, or measure yourself by other Christians, and in many ways he will seem to let other people do things which he will not let you do.

Other Christians and ministers who seem very religious and useful, may push themselves, pull wires, and work schemes to carry out their plans, but you cannot do it, and if you attempt it, you will meet with such failure and rebuke from the Lord as to make you sorely penitent.

Others may boast of themselves, of their work, of their successes, of their writings, but the Holy Spirit will not allow you to do any such thing, and if you begin it, he will lead you into some deep mortification that will make you despise yourself and all your good works.

Others may be allowed to succeed in making money, or may have a legacy left to them, but it is likely God will keep you poor, because he wants you to have something far better than gold, namely, a helpless dependence upon Him, that he may have the privilege of supplying your needs day by day out of an unseen treasury.

The Lord may let others be honored and put forward, and keep you hidden in obscurity, because he wants to produce some choice fragrant fruit for His coming glory, which can only be produced in the shade. He may let others be great, but keep you small. He may let others do a work for him and get the credit for it, but he will make you work and toil on without knowing how much you are doing; and then make your work still more precious he may let others get credit for the work you have done, and thus make your reward ten times greater when Jesus comes.

The Holy Spirit will put a strict watch over you, with a jealous love, and will rebuke you for little words and feelings or wasting your time, which other Christians never feel distressed over. So make up your mind that God is an infinite Sovereign, and has a right to do as he pleases with His own. He may not explain to you a thousand things which puzzle your reason in his dealings with you, but if you absolutely sell yourself to be his love slave, he will wrap you up in a jealous love, and bestow upon you many blessings which come only to those who are in the inner circle.

Settle it forever, then, that you are to deal directly with the Holy Spirit, and that he is to have the privilege of tying your tongue, or chaining your hand, or closing your eyes, in ways that he does not seem to use with others. Now, when you are so possessed with the living God that you are, in your secret heart, pleased and delighted over this **peculiar, personal, private, jealous guardianship and management of the Holy Spirit over your life**, you will have found the vestibule of Heaven.

VICTORY

When you are forgotten or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you smile inwardly, glorying in the insult or the oversight, because thereby counted worthy to suffer with Christ - that is victory.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, you taste offended, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you take it all in patient, loving silence - that is victory.

When you are content with any food, any raiment, any climate, any society, any solitude, **any** interruption by the will of God **-that is victory.**

“Lord Jesus, make thyself to me
A living, bright Reality;
More present to faith’s vision kneen
Than any earthly object seen;
More dear, more intimately nigh
Than e’en the dearest earthly tie.”