

Message Three

Job's Experience of God's Consuming and Stripping in the Old Testament Being Far Behind That of Paul in the New Testament

Scripture Reading: Job 3:1; 2 Cor. 4:10-12, 16-18; Phil. 1:19-25; 4:4

- I. Job was disturbed, perplexed, and entangled to the uttermost by his suffering of the disasters that befell his possessions and his children and the plague on his body, in spite of his perfection, uprightness, and integrity:**
- A. When Job cursed the day of his birth, equivalent to cursing his mother, he surely was not perfect and upright, nor did he hold his integrity; rather, he became bankrupt in integrity—Job 3:1.
 - B. God's intention was to tear down the natural Job in his perfection and uprightness that He might build up a renewed Job in God's nature and attributes in order to make Job a man of God, constituted with God according to His economy; such a man (like Paul) would never be entangled by any troubles and problems so that he would curse his birth and prefer to die rather than to live—Phil. 1:19-25; 4:5-9.
 - C. Job was dwelling on his excellent past and sighing over his miserable present (Job 29:1—30:31); he held fast insistently to, and even boasted of, his uprightness, righteousness, integrity, and perfection (27:1-7; 31:1-40):
 - 1. Paul, however, exercised to forget the things that were behind in the past in order to gain the present “today Christ” to the fullest extent—Phil. 3:8, 13-14.
 - 2. Furthermore, Paul was not a person of yesterday but a person of today (Heb. 3:7-8, 15; Psa. 95:7-8); we should not look ahead to the future and not look back to the past; we are people of today (Matt. 6:11, 33-34; Luke 19:9-10; 23:43).
 - 3. The Christ whom we love is the Christ now, the Christ today, and the Christ on the throne in the heavens, who is our daily salvation and moment-by-moment supply, sustaining us to live a heavenly life on earth—Matt. 28:20; 1 Pet. 1:8; Heb. 8:2; 4:14-15; 7:26; 2 Cor. 6:2; Rom. 5:10.
 - 4. When we fully become the New Jerusalem, we will have today since every day in eternity is today; the only day we have is today, not tomorrow.
 - D. Through his eight times of speaking to his three friends, Job exposed himself as a person with the following characteristics:
 - 1. Job was self-righteous (Job 6:30; 9:20; 27:5-6; 32:1); he was darkened by the success and attainments of his natural being, contented with what he had become, yet he was unaware of his miserable situation before God (cf. Phil. 3:9; Rev. 3:17-18).
 - 2. Job acknowledged God in name but not in reality; he was not saturated by God, filled with God, and mingled with God to become one with God—Psa. 92:10; Lev. 2:4-5; Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Cor. 6:17; Eph. 3:19; 5:18, 26; Heb. 2:10-11.
 - 3. Job did not possess any element that indicated some aspect and some feature of the New Jerusalem as God's organism to live God and to express God for eternity; in contrast to this, the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the name of the Lord are written upon the overcomer, indicating that what God is, the nature of the New Jerusalem, and the person of the Lord have all been wrought into the overcomer—Rev. 3:12.
 - E. Neither Job nor his friends knew the purpose of God's dealing with him, as the apostle Paul did in declaring to the New Testament believers that the affliction the believers are suffering works out for them an eternal weight of glory, which is the God of glory to be their glorious portion for them to gain and enjoy unto eternity—2 Cor. 4:17.

- F. If Job and his friends had taken the time to seek God in a spirit of humility and by exercising their spirit in prayer (Isa. 57:15; 66:2; Col. 4:2), God could have shown them that a regenerated, transformed, and glorified saint in Christ has nothing to do with the natural man and does not need to build up himself with the natural virtues.
- G. This heavenly vision would have saved them from the time-wasting, pain-increasing, and vain debates in thirty-five chapters as a record of a group of blind persons groping in darkness; they talked about God and also referred to their spirit (Job 32:8), but they exercised their mind in three rounds of long debates instead of exercising their spirit to pray for Job and to fellowship with one another so that all of them could touch God and receive God as their life, light, and spiritual supply:
 1. If we are going to have vital groups, we must be warned by these talks in the book of Job; the group we see in the book of Job affords us a negative example; it is the kind of group meeting we should not have in the church life today; the first thing that we must do when we come together is to exercise our spirit to pray; the vital groups are groups of vital prayer—cf. Acts 12:5, 11-12; Heb. 10:24-25; 3:13.
 2. The groups are vital in these two spirits—vital in our human spirit and vital in God’s divine Spirit; the Christian life is a life of the consummated Spirit as the consummation of the Triune God dwelling in and mingled with our regenerated spirit to be one spirit—John 4:24; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 3:14; 6:18.
 3. We need to learn to touch the divine Spirit in our spirit; this is the intrinsic significance of the Christian life and work; this is the move of God in man and the move of man in God to fulfill His economy, His plan, to dispense Himself in Christ as the Spirit into man in order to build up His Body and prepare His bride to consummate the New Jerusalem—2 Cor. 2:13; Phil. 3:3; Rom. 1:9.
 4. Paul stresses in the book of Romans that whatever we are (2:29; 8:5-6, 9), whatever we have (vv. 10, 16), and whatever we do toward God (1:9; 7:6; 8:4; 12:11) must be in our spirit; we must be perfected and built up to be persons in the spirit; there is no other way to be a lover of God, to be a seeker of Christ, or to be an overcomer than to be in the spirit (Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).

II. Job’s experience of God’s consuming and stripping in the Old Testament was far behind that of Paul in the New Testament—1 Tim. 1:16:

- A. God’s consuming is to exhaust us, and God’s stripping is to tear down and take away the totality of our natural integrity—our natural perfection and uprightness in our character—that replaces our living out Christ to express Christ—Phil. 1:19-20; 3:4-9a.
- B. Day by day and hour by hour, Job was unhappily being consumed, but in the New Testament, God’s consuming and stripping become pleasant things; since the day he was converted, Paul was a person under God’s consuming and stripping as a prisoner in the Lord, but he was filled with joy and rejoicing—Acts 9:15-16; 2 Cor. 4:16; Phil. 1:19-21a; Eph. 3:1; 4:1; Phil. 1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 17-18, 28-29; 3:1; 4:1, 4.
- C. Paul was crucified with Christ; to be reborn through termination and germination is to be regenerated crucified (John 3:5; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12); we, like Paul, were reborn crucified for the purpose that from that time it would be no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20).
- D. Now in our Christian life we are dying to live (v. 20; 1 Cor. 15:31, 36; John 12:24; 2 Cor. 4:11); dying to live is the proper meaning of bearing the cross (Matt. 16:24-26; *Hymns*, #622).
- E. In his experience of God’s consuming and stripping, Paul was not constricted under the pressures on every side and did not perish despite his being cast down; Paul did not

curse the day of his birth, and he did not say that he preferred to die rather than to live; on the contrary, after much consideration Paul said that he still preferred to live for the saints' progress (their growth in life) and for their joy of the faith (their enjoyment of Christ)—2 Cor. 1:8-9; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21-25.

- F. When Paul was suffering distresses for the sake of Christ (2 Cor. 12:10), he was well pleased, he was happy, and he was even rejoicing in the Lord for his experiences (Col. 1:24; Phil. 2:17-18).
- G. Paul wanted to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings in order to be conformed to Christ's death (3:10); he took Christ's death as a mold for his life, and it was his great pleasure to be molded in the death of Christ.
- H. Paul magnified Christ by living Him, whether through life or through death, by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; when God created man, this was the kind of life He wanted man to live—1:19-21a; Gen. 1:26.
- I. Paul said that he was always bearing about in the body the putting to death, the killing, of Jesus and being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus might be manifested in his mortal flesh; when we are under the killing of the Lord's death, His resurrection life is imparted through us into others—2 Cor. 4:10-12:
 - 1. The putting to death of Jesus in our environment cooperates with the indwelling Spirit to kill our natural man (our outer man), comprising our body and our soul; as our outer man is being consumed by the killing work of death, our inner man is being renewed day by day with the fresh supply of the resurrection life—v. 16.
 - 2. Paul said that he died daily (1 Cor. 15:31); daily he risked death, faced death, and died to self (2 Cor. 11:23; 4:11; 1:8-9; Rom. 8:36).
 - 3. The application of Christ's death and its effectiveness is in the compounded Spirit, who dwells in our spirit to dispense Christ's death and its effectiveness from our spirit to our soul and even to our mortal body—Exo. 30:22-25; Rom. 8:6, 9-11.
 - 4. This dispensing is the anointing (1 John 2:20, 27), and the anointing is the moving of the indwelling Spirit; our prayer activates the moving of the indwelling Spirit, and within this moving, there is the killing power.
- J. In his experience of God's consuming and stripping, Paul said that our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory; *eternal* is in contrast to *momentary*, *weight* is in contrast to *lightness*, and *glory* is in contrast to *affliction*—2 Cor. 4:16-17; Rom. 8:28-29.
- K. Job considered his suffering of affliction something very heavy, but Paul considered his affliction to be momentary and light; instead of caring about our affliction, we need to care for the increase of God as the weight of glory within us by our being transformed from one degree of glory to another; as long as we have more of God in us, this is what really matters—Acts 7:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 2:19:
 - 1. Like Paul, we are in an environment of suffering and pressure that works with the Spirit to kill our natural man; we should cooperate with the indwelling Spirit and accept the outward environment in our spirit, soul, and body, because we do not regard the things of temporary affliction which are seen but the things of the eternal glory which are not seen—Phil. 1:19-20; 2 Cor. 4:18; Heb. 11:1, 27; 2 Cor. 5:7.
 - 2. We need to exercise our spirit to rejoice in the midst of our killing environment (Phil. 4:4); the Lord's sovereignty is operating to put us under the killing of Christ's death so that His life may be manifested in our body in the renewing of our inner man to make us as new as the New Jerusalem (2 Cor. 4:10-12, 16; 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Rev. 21:2, 5, 10).