

Prepare for the Hardships of Life**December 4, 2016**

I read a story this week that is worth sharing. A woman wrote the years of her married life and how she fell in love with her shining knight. At first she looked at commercial ads for diamonds and dreamed that one day she would be wearing a sparkling stone to show the world that she had been chosen. However, as the days went by the young man never mentioned marriage and the girl began to realize that he was not a man of means. He had good character and his love for her was genuine. She realized that she was content and happy just being with him for he was a faithful friend and she could trust him to always be there for her. They dated for some time and eventually the subject of marriage came up. He explained to her that he didn't earn a lot of money at his job, but that he earned an honest living. He would not be able to afford an expensive ring that he knew she wanted, but he would honor his marriage vows to be faithful, love her, and keep her all the days of his life. She realized that she loved him and she wanted to be his wife for she was proud of his character and a sparkling diamond was just a material object that was standing in the way of her wedding day. They sat down together and he told her that he had saved \$150.00 for a ring for her and he was sorry that it was all he could afford.

Together they went shopping at a local department store and they picked out a ring that had a price tag of \$130.00. The clerk, not realizing the situation, made a comment like this: "I can't believe that some people buy these for engagement rings. I would never marry a man who wanted to give me one of these for an engagement ring."

The lady was furious for her fiancée was hurt and she felt like putting a rag in the clerk's mouth for this was her decision and she would wear this ring with pride for it was the best that her lover could do and it was a gift that came from a loving heart. The young man paid for the ring and they left the store.

Now looking back, the bride wrote of the lessons in life that she learned from that incident. Her life with her husband has been one of fulfillment. They have worked together, shared together and stayed together through thick and thin, having plenty and doing without, enjoying simple pleasures in life and appreciating God's blessings to them. She has never regretted giving up the notion of sporting an expensive diamond for the true treasure that she has is the relationship that both of them have worked hard to achieve. They have matured and grown together and the vow "'til death do us part" is something they treasure and their love motivates them to walk hand in hand 'til that day comes.

Satan knows man's weaknesses better than we know our own. The one thing that he doesn't take into account is the fact that God's love is more powerful than any temptation he can use to lead men astray. In the book of Job, Satan tried to convince God that Job would curse him and pull away from him if he lost the comfortable life that God had provided for him. God gave him permission to take away the comforts and treasures of

this life that Job was accustomed to. Satan was not to touch Job's life. If you read this book, you will notice the lack of any compassion that Satan would show towards a righteous man. He stripped him of his children and the house that they were in, his animals and his servants all at one time. How did Job respond? He shaved his head as a symbol of sorrow and he bowed to the ground to worship God. He spoke that he came into this world with nothing and he would go out of this world with nothing. The LORD gave these things to him and now he has taken them away. He praised the name of the LORD. He didn't sin and he didn't blame God. God confronted Satan with the fact that his thinking was lacking truth. Satan knows nothing of the power of love for God is love. Satan then said that a man would do whatever he had to in order to save his life. The LORD gave Satan permission to attack his body, but he was not to take his life. Satan told him that after he was done with Job, he would curse God to his face. Satan used painful sores from the top of Job's head to the sole of his feet. Job had little to comfort him and he sat in ashes in misery. His wife asked him why he was staying innocent before God. Look what was happening to him. "Curse God and die," she advised him. Job answered her with these words, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Should we take only good things from God and not trouble?" In all of Job's troubles, he didn't sin against God.

Men who once were Job's friends came and accused him of sinning and bringing God's judgment against himself. He cursed the day he was born for everything was darkness around him and there was nobody to encourage him. He lost his wealth, his health, the respect of the community, his wife wanted him to give it all up and die, and he had no answers to why this was happening to him. His so called friends continued to try to get a confession of sin that he had committed that brought this on to him for surely he had done something terrible to have all this evil come against him. Job continued to state his integrity and his innocence.

Satan lost the battle for Job stated "Though God slay me, I will trust him." Job 13:15. In Job 19:23, Job says these words: "How I wish my words were written down, written on a scroll. I wish they were carved with an iron pen into lead or carved into stone forever. I know my Redeemer lives, and in the end he will stand upon the earth. Even after my skin has been destroyed, in my flesh I will see God. I will see him myself; I will see him with my very own eyes. How my heart wants this to happen." God answered that request for the Book of Job records the relationship between God, his created beings and Satan. Faith, love and hope kept Job strong through the trial. He didn't waver in his faith in God. He didn't allow the troubles of earth to cause him to lose hope in eternal life. He had prepared for the tribulations of this life before they fell upon him. His friends had wrong perspectives concerning God and Job had to pray for them lest God's judgment would have come upon them. Job asked God questions, but God is not accountable to

men and he isn't obligated to answer them. God asked Job many questions and those questions brought him to the correct understanding of the power and love of God.

King David asked, "Where can I go to get away from your Spirit? Where can I run from you? If I go up to the heavens, you are there. If I lie down in the grave, you are there. If I rise with the sun in the east and settle in the west beyond the sea, even there you will guide me." Psalm 139:7-10. Asking where God is would be like a fish asking where water is or a bird asking where air is. In Psalms 72:8, it states that God's kingdom goes from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.

Satan uses the false concept that people will curse God if he doesn't give them all the comforts and blessings without troubles and sorrows. That is true of those who are not filled with love of Jesus Christ. They blame God for troubles and losses in life when they have a wrong concept of God. Those who do not know him, hurl insults his way when troubles come because they have not prepared their hearts for tribulations.

However, for those of us who have come to know him in an intimate relationship, we know that He is good; He is righteous; He does all things well; we can trust him to work all things out for our good; and we will be rewarded for our service to him when he returns.

Read Mark 7:37, Romans 8:28, Acts 17:31, Psalms 9:8, Isaiah 25:8, Revelation 21:4, Isaiah 40:10, Revelation 22:12 to gain knowledge about the truth of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ loves us and he died that we can have eternal life. Satan is a deceiver and he will do everything that he can possibly do to destroy our faith, our hope and our confidence in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We must stay planted in the word of God so his lies do not penetrate our hearts.

In John 6:53, Jesus spoke to his followers concerning spiritual matters of eating the flesh of Jesus and drinking his blood. He was not speaking of the natural body, but was speaking of filling your life with God's Spirit so that you can overcome the temptations of this world and have light so you will not be deceived by the god of this world, Satan.

There were many who heard this saying and decided that they didn't want to hear those words for they were hard sayings and they stopped following after him saying that they could not accept his teachings. Jesus asked if the saying bothered them. He told them that the Spirit gives life; flesh doesn't give life. Jesus' words are life and they are spirit. He explained to them that those that refused to believe would not have eternal life and only those who his Father draws to him, can come. When Jesus saw many turn and walk away, he asked his disciples, "Will you also leave me?" Simon Peter answered, "Lord, where would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One from God."

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1 that God had appointed him to be a preacher and an apostle and a teacher to the Gentiles. For this cause he suffered great persecution but nevertheless he was not ashamed. He wrote these words: "for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him

against that day." He tells believers to hold fast to the truth of sound words which he has taught and have faith and love which is in Jesus Christ. Hang on to truth and goodness. In the Psalms, there is a portion where the Psalmist wonders why those who are not believers prosper while those who live right often have less in this life. Look at Psalms 73. It starts out by saying "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." But then it goes on to say that "as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had almost slipped (I had almost stopped believing and almost lost my faith) for I was envious of the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." He continued by making comparisons to the struggles of the believers versus the wealth and comforts afforded by the wicked who seemingly go through life without paying consequences for their evil ways. They get away with doing evil things and their money protects them from the consequences that others have to face. They look for profits and do not control selfish desires. They make fun of others and speak evil; proudly they speak of hurting others. They brag to the sky and they say they own the earth. So their people turn to them and give them whatever they want. They say, "How can God know? What does God Most High know?"

These people are wicked, always at ease and getting richer. I wondered why I had kept my heart pure. Why have I kept my hands from doing wrong? I have suffered all day long and have been punished every morning. He acknowledges to God that if he had decided to talk about his doubts he would have let people down. He tried to understand all of this, but it was too hard for him to see until he went to the Temple of God. Then he understood what will happen in the end. The wicked will perish for when they Lord rises up, the wicked will disappear.

He realized that his thinking toward the LORD was incorrect. His thinking was cleared and he realized that God was always with him and would hold on to his hand guiding him with sound advice and later he would be received up into glory with God. He ends by saying "I have no one in heaven but you; I want nothing on earth besides you. My body and mind may become weak but God is my strength. His is mine forever."

Those whose thoughts are far from God will be destroyed for the unfaithful will come to nothing. The Lord protects those that are his.

By reading the word of God, you will find truth and gain an eternal perspective. This world and everything in it will one day be destroyed. Jesus Christ will meet all of our needs according to his riches in glory. Philippians 4:19.

Trials and tribulations are used by God to teach us patience and to bring the fruit of the Spirit into our lives. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't depend on your own understanding. Proverbs 3:5. Learn the truths of the Scriptures and you will have the ammunition necessary to combat Satan's lies. Pray one for another. Jesus Christ is coming soon.