

MEMORY VERSE: “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” *Romans 5:3-5, NKJV*

LESSON STUDY INTRO

This week’s lesson considers the potential effect of life’s “setbacks,” as well as our response, on our relationship with God.

1. Christians should expect “setbacks” (Sun – Fri)

- The Bible is clear that in this life, all will experience hardships (Mt. 5:45; Eccl. 9:11; Jn. 16:33; Ac. 14:22).
 - The teaching has become more prominent in Christian circles that since God loves us so much and wants the best for us, He will materially prosper us and keep us from all trials (see Jn. 10:10; 2 Cor. 8:9; Ps. 37:4; Jn. 14:14 w/ 1Jn. 5:14).
 - This apparent dichotomy can be especially confusing to believers in times of trial (see Mk. 4:38).
 - “Jesus knew a storm would come but suggested they go anyway. He had an important life lesson to teach His closest followers.” *Qtlly, Sun, par 2*
 - The lesson gives the example of Jairus and the woman with the 12-year infirmity (Mk. 5:21-43). The example could also be cited of Jesus deciding to stay “two more days in the place where He was” once He learned that His friend Lazarus was sick (Jn. 11:6).
 - Paul, when afflicted, sought the Lord for deliverance, only to be told to endure it because “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor. 12:9).
 - Why, in these examples as well as many others, didn’t God bring the hoped for and expected deliverance? Because

2. Trials are God’s character subcontractors (Tue, Wed)

- God doesn’t leave us in the dark about why trials come. He says repeatedly that this is a means intended to fit us for eternity.
 - James’ counsel to rejoice in trials is given because of the character the trials produce (see Jas. 1:2-4).

- Paul encourages us with the thought that our afflictions here, which are temporary, are working out eternal characters (2 Cor. 4:16-18).
- Jesus Himself “learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8).

We miss very much because we do not grasp the blessings that may be ours in our afflictions. All our sufferings and sorrows, all our temptations and trials, all our sadness and griefs, all our persecutions and privations, and in short all things, work together for our good.... All experiences and circumstances are God’s workmen whereby good is brought to us. Let us look at the light behind the cloud. ML 185.4

This world is not the Christian’s heaven, but merely the workshop of God, where we are to be fitted up to unite with sinless angels in a holy heaven. 2T 187.2

3. God always has ultimate control (Tue)

- The story of Job, the quintessential “suffering” experience, tells how God allows Job to be afflicted unbeknown to Job himself (see Job 1, 2).
 - While Satan is clearly portrayed as the instigator of Job’s trials (see Job 1:12; 2:6), Job consistently depicts God as the one who is responsible (see Job 10:3; 16:12), even to the point of declaring “If it is not He, who else could it be?” (Job 9:24).
 - “[W]hen Job places God at the origin of suffering, he really is voicing the monotheistic affirmation that there is only one God, one power, who is ultimately responsible for what happens to humanity.... This paradox informs the very substance and quality of Job’s faith.” Qtlly, Teacher’s Comments, pp. 147
 - Despite his personal “setbacks,” however, Job is confident that (1) God is in ultimate control, (2) his personal experience is fitting him for heaven, and (3) he will soon stand face to face with God in a world where there are no setbacks (Job 23:8-12).
 - “As we look back on how various individuals in the Bible responded to life’s setbacks, we can take courage that our response in such times can strengthen our walk with God, who does not change (Mal. 3:6) and whose love remains constant.” Qtlly, Fri, last par

CONCLUSION

[2 Cor. 4:17, 18 quoted] Paul’s eyes were ever fastened on the unseen and eternal. Realizing that he was fighting against supernatural powers, he placed his dependence on God, and in this lay his strength. It is by seeing Him who is invisible that strength and vigor of soul are gained and the power of earth over mind and character is broken. AA 363.1.