

Discipleship Series for New Believers

Lesson 15: Principles of an Overcoming Life When Hard Times Come

By Kristin Bone

The example of Job remaining faithful to God in the midst of satanic persecution is encouraging. Job had nothing to stand on but his integrity and relationship with God. He held fast to his profession of faith. Job had a past track record of faithfulness to God. There was a preparation ground before God allowed Satan to persecute him. In Job 1:1, it clearly shows Job was "...perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." In verse 5, Job arose early and offered up sacrifices to God in case any of his sons had sinned in their hearts. He wanted to ensure he and his family was right with God. He had been faithful to God in the small things, and so God could trust him to be faithful in the big things like holding fast through satanic persecution.

While Job did not sin, he did show human frailty. He demonstrated that while his spirit clung to God with steadfast devotion, the flesh can only take so much before it fails. Job 6:8-10 reads, "Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for, that God would be willing to crush me, to let loose his hand and cut me off! Then I would still have this consolation – my joy in unrelenting pain – that I had not denied the words of the Holy One," (NIV).

Job had determined in his heart that as long as he was alive he would not deny God. But after all, he was only a man, and Satan was determined to show God that Job would not be faithful to Him. He wanted to show God that God's plan of men worshipping Him from the heart of their own free will was a foolish dream. Satan's whole intent was not to destroy Job's life, his happiness, or his possessions but his relationship with God. In the middle of a battle of this magnitude, the flesh can become weary. One can wonder how long they will be able to hold on while the onslaughts of hell continue. But God is faithful and enough. Job did not deny God. Though there were moments he questioned being able to make it, God helped him through.

The second way Job overcame Satan's attacks was through intimacy and dependency on God. Job knew his God, and because of this, he could stand alone when his friends did not give him good counsel, when his wife told him to curse God, and when catastrophe after catastrophe occurred. Job depended on God and would not walk independently of God. Job 13:14-16 states, "Why do I put myself in jeopardy and take my life in my hands? Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face. Indeed this will turn out for my deliverance for no godless man would dare come before him!" (NIV)

Job knew that although things were difficult serving God that self-sufficiency would take him from under God's protection. He knew the ways of God because he was intimate with Him. He knew that these things would turn around for his deliverance because he was familiar with the character and ways of God. Job knew God would hear him because he was a godly man even though Job believed God was against him.

Job also stood because of the hope set before him. He knew that his reward was not what he could attain here on earth, but he lived in light of eternity. Job 19:25-27 reads, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes – I and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" Instead of focusing on his circumstances, He focused on God and His promises. This hope helped keep Job from despair. Job loved God and desired to be with Him. His heart yearned for the Living God, and therefore, he could not deny Him.

Job's reward for faithfulness was God's restoration of everything Job had, increased twice. Even more, Job's reward was more of God. Because of Job's faithfulness, God gave Job a new revelation of who He was, and it was not just head knowledge but heart knowledge. In Job 42:5, Job declares to God, "My ears have heard of you but now my eyes have seen you." Job's true desire was more of God, and this desire was proven. Job did not serve God just because he was blessed. Job had learned to accept both the good and the bad from God's hand because he was in love with the person of God (Job 2:10). God granted Job the desire of his heart which was more of Him.

What God has been showing me through Job's life is how to cling to God when hard times come especially persecution for the gospel. I know "persecution" is not specifically addressed in Job, but hopefully you will see how it is related. Sometimes trials can expose areas of our hearts that still need God to work on. Trials can expose the chinks in our armor. It can also expose the areas that are solid, and we can shine like the godly men of old when they come. When persecution comes, no one else can help you. You will stand and fall based on your own relationship with God. Persecution exposes whether what you built on your foundation will stand or fall. What Job had built on his foundation stood through satanic persecution. There is a preparation time. I believe God works in a believer who will be persecuted. All the time leading up to persecution makes one stand, not the moment. If we are faithful to Him in what He has revealed now in the small things, we will be building up a stronghold of obedience. This stronghold of obedience will help us not to compromise in the bigger things of the future.

God is the reward of the one who is persecuted and remains faithful. I believe there is a special grace given when you are being persecuted. With the measure you surrender yourself God will be faithful to fill you. **I believe that when someone is faithful through loneliness and**

torture with no church support, then God will bless you with Himself. He will cause you to stand just as He helped Job to stand in the midst of satanic persecution. If you truly desire God and seek His face, you can accept persecution because you are no longer living for this world but for eternity.