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The Man Satan Wanted

by Harold L. Willmington

"Oh, for the good old days!" Only eternity will reveal the countless times human beings have sighed those words in times of trouble. In truth, for the majority, the good old days were probably not that good. But that was not the case for a certain rich man from the land of Uz. In a matter of hours he lost his friends, fortune, and family. A fearful and loathsome disease befell him, causing him to despair of life itself. But by far, the most unbearable agony was heaven's deafening silence to his pitiful cry—"Why is all this happening to me? Where is God? Does He care? Will he hear?" Job's desire to return to better times was certainly understandable!

But even Job would not have been better off in the good old days, for God would turn his sorrow into singing tomorrow. This is true for all who love God, and Job qualified. If he endured the pain, he would enjoy the prize. He could not put stock in friends or feelings; both would let him down.

Job's children were dead, his wealth was gone, and his body wracked with disease and pain. His own wife had advised him to curse God and die. Then his friends came to him. Did ever a man so desperately need his friends as this man? But his friends were more like foes. They condemned rather than comforted him. They added to instead of taking away his grief. They offered no tender touch, only pointing fingers. He was quickly judged and denounced, without trial or defense. His pitiful protests fell on deaf ears. They called him a terrible sinner, saying that the Almighty simply did not allow righteous people to suffer. The greater the sin, the greater the suffering, they chided him. For a while Job seemed able to cope, even with this heaped-on hostility. But eventually fallen flesh displayed itself. He heard himself lash out against these fake friends, and worse still, against his very God. He felt that his troubles could get no worse and that they would never end. Only through patience would he endure. In fact, Job was his own best adviser: "For I know that my redeemer liveth,

and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19:25).

Job's travail seemed pointless and endless, but in reality it was neither. He was patient. The storm passed. The light shone through. His suffering had a purpose.

First, God used Job to silence Satan: "Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face . . . And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face" (Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5).

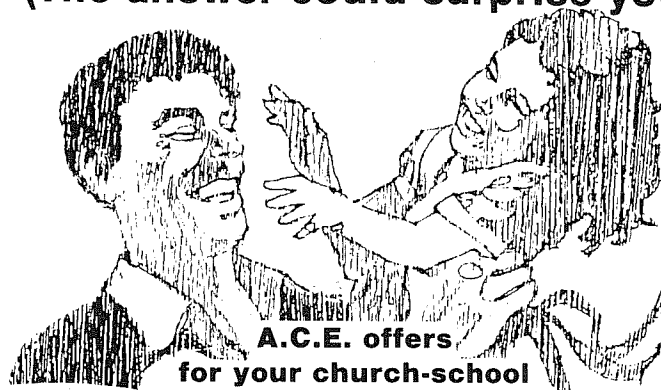
Through suffering, Job was able to see God: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5).

And he saw himself: "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6).

Job's suffering taught his friends not to judge others: "And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (Job 42:7).

Finally, Job learned to pray for, rather than to lash out against, his critics: "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). ■

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