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COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY

THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2010

7:00PM

STUDY OUTLINE #024

Scriptural Text: Job 23: 1-end; 2 Corinth 12: 1-10

Theme: Discipleship and conflicts part 2

Words in marble: When we know the reason, we can go through the season.

a. Introduction

There is no discipleship without challenges and conflicts; see 2 Timothy 3: 10-12, Philippians 1: 29. The encounters strengthen our character and convictions while validating our allegiance. However, we must be prepared by having a strong consciousness of Divine presence for direction and instruction. We can achieve this as we completely submit to Him to execute His purpose and will in and through us as Jesus did. **Hebrew 5: 8; 10: 5-9.**

We saw in our last study that ignorance of challenges and its purposes explains away our weak responses to inevitable occurrences, and present us as poor specimen of followership and professors of the faith.

Simply put, we are ill-equipped and ill-prepared to face odd moments, and our manner of entry into the faith did not help matters; we were promised world of bliss once we turn to Christ. However, we now know better.

We have looked at **Testing**: encounters orchestrated by God to prove the stuff we are made of. In other to grow our roots downwards and bear fruit upwards, we are today considering another aspect of challenges. They are adversity, distress, troubles or misfortune etc.

b. Quick check on distress, adversity

Isaiah mentioned the response of God to a situation facing the children of Israel. He explained His intentions in the whole episode. **Isaiah 48: 9-11; 2 Corinth 10: 11-18.**

Faced with similar circumstances today, we will be tempted to:

- Seek to know the reason for the affliction, torture, torment, adversity, agony in the first place; **Why me.**
- Find out what we have done that warrants such? **Lord do I deserve this**
- Know what our response should be on such occasions?

Understanding distress or adversity.

Definition.

i. Chambers Dictionary defines distress as mental or emotional pain. **2** financial difficulty; hardship. **3** great danger or peril; also to upset someone.

According to Webster Dictionary, distress is a pain or suffering affecting the body, painful situation; a state of danger or desperate need, trouble, misfortune, misery, agony. It implies an external and usually temporary cause of great physical or mental strain and stress or conscious endurance of pain (suffering).

ii. Defining adversity

According to Chambers Dictionary: adversity is a circumstance or event that causes trouble or sorrow; a misfortune

In Webster Dictionary, it is a state, condition, or instance of serious or continued difficulty.

Job readily comes to mind. He could not understand rationale behind his misfortunes or troubles. He however concluded he was been tested and that will turn out well for him.

Sometimes we go through some distresses, experience losses, and witness hardships; we live through pains and delays to our expectations. Now and then, our businesses and endeavours encounter turmoil even when the visions for their set up were divinely given. Worst still we have no clue to these occurrences.

In each of these, God not only wants to manifest Himself, adjudge our level of trust in Him to lift our heads or see if we are settling for an alternative. When we respond positively, we give Him opportunity to glorify Himself.

We will check through the Scriptures to see the manner of distresses and adversities, learn to comport ourselves to satisfy Divine expectations for an intended maximum rewards.

1. The 3 Hebrew children in Daniel Chapters 1-3

- They were carried into slavery for no making of theirs...Daniel 1: 1-6
- The king had a dream; they were no party to it, yet were held responsible for its interpretation or pay a supreme sacrifice, Daniel 2: 10-18
- The authorities did not have any recourse to them before erecting the image of gold and yet mandated them to worship. Daniel 3

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DISCIPLESHIP AND CONFLICTS 2 *(Continued)*

- All these provided opportunity for God to show His glory, and confirm His supremacy over all. Daniel 2:17-49; 3:12-30; (Romans 8:28-39)

2. Hannah in her barrenness. 1 Samuel 1 & 2.

- She was distressed by her adversary, Penninah on an issue God decreed will not happen 1 Samuel 1:6-10, Deut. 7:14...**do I deserve this?**
- Her womb was closed and nobody provided her with reasons for that.
- Her husband's consoling words were more of complicity than assuaging her pains.
- She was misunderstood by even the spiritual authorities. 1 Samuel 1: 14-18
- Her persistence to God drew attention of heaven for a deal. She accepted her womb to reward God with a prophet. 1 Samuel 1: 11, 27-28; 2: 1-10.

3. Daniel, Daniel 1-6

- He was carried as a slave on matters he was no party to its creation (result of continued disobedience of his people), Jeremiah 25
- He never promoted himself to his position in office to warrant barrage of ill-feelings against him. Daniel 6:1-5.
- His only offence was pursuit of excellence, zero tolerance for mediocrity, corruption, complacency and laziness (these are character traits of God on display), Daniel 6: 3-18; Psalm 15
- He offered no apologies; neither was diplomatic on matters of loyalty and allegiance to his God, Daniel 6: 10-16.
- **He was resolute to his conviction, making no excuses for his commitment.**
- **He was neither brow-beaten nor cowed to submission or bowed to pressure. God showed up and was glorified. Daniel was rewarded. Daniel 6:16-28**

4. The life of Paul summed it all up in 2 Corinth 10, 11, 12.

He never deserved all he went through, the contradictions, persecutions, afflictions and oppositions, but God explained His purposes through them, **2 Corinth 12: 1-13.**

Using the understanding God gave to Paul, we arrive at what our responses should be:

c. Our thoughts and responses to distressing moments:

- We must understand God has perspectives different from our natural reasonings... Isaiah 55:8-9; 2 Peter 3:8
- He permits little pressure to release the juice of life in us... 2 Corinth 4: 6-18; Acts 4: 22
- True mark of discipleship is cultivating a consciousness of God's presence or maintaining deep intimacy or fellowship with Him at all time. **Realise there is no downtime or off moment with God. Always be at the peak of fellowship/intimacy with Him... Psalm 27: 4-5, 8; 63; Titus 3: 1; 1 Peter 3: 15. (relate with Joseph in Genesis 39:9)**
- Just as eagle is energised and strengthened by storm, a true disciple finds fresh and rewarding opportunities in challenging moments as God readily identifies with such.
Daniel knew what draws Him and eagerly utilise such encounters to affirm his allegiance. The 3 Hebrew children answered the way they did because they have experienced Him showing up in moments of trial. Daniel 1-3; 6; 2 Corinth 12: 5-10; Hebrew 11: 33-35 (*a true disciple embraces challenges not intimidated or scared stiff; angels came to strength Jesus at such moments; hosts of heaven surrounded Elisha etc... Psalm 50 1; Isaiah 43:1-7*)
 We yield to the Him absolutely and get connected to the nerve centre for help in times of trouble... Psalm 50: 15; Psalm 20.
- Our response should be to wait on Him to renew our strength and give direction... Isaiah 40:28-31; Isaiah 28: 16.
- Habakkuk took off on emotional trip until He realised that what draws God is acknowledging Him in moments of turmoil, adversity... Habakkuk 1 & 2: 1-6; 3: 17.

As you keep an awareness of His presence constantly, He will definitely turn all your moments into High visibility with maximum impact. Job 42.

Prayers

Lord my heart will make its boast in you regardless of my circumstance. Let my situation honour you. Jeremiah 9: 23-24.