

Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

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Sickness & Adversity

(as it relates to God's resolution of the angelic conflict)

In light of the fact that the believer has been created by God, purchased by the blood of Christ, and given unsearchable riches in Christ, his chief aim and purpose is to glorify God in all he does, all he has (including time, resources, and talent), and in every lot of his life (Isaiah 43:7; Romans 1:21; 11:33, 36; 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 10:31). For the believer, sickness and

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other adversity is an opportunity to glorify God in several ways because of its relation to how God is currently resolving the angelic conflict, which began with the angel Lucifer coveting the glory of God. Lucifer's desire for self glory resulted in his fall with a third of the angels. The earth is his domain now, which means a present aspect of

the conflict is being worked out on the earth, beginning apparently in the garden of Eden. Thus, the church is now involved in this conflict because it is the body of Christ on earth. Christ's conflict is now our conflict because we are in union with Him. This conflict, in its future earthly aspect, culminates near Jerusalem after the millennial reign of Christ (Is. 14:13-15; John 10:10; Eph 3:8-10; Rev. 20:7-10; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

My first thought is that God is glorified when a believer, who is of far less glorious form than Lucifer was (flesh vs. angelic form - Hebrews 2:9) remains content to serve, worship, and trust God when he is in a weakened state (ill or experiencing other adversity). This response is contrasted with Lucifer's (now Satan) who was one of the greatest and most glorious of all the angels yet was not content to serve God and to give Him the glory due Him while even in such an exalted state of strength and glory (a glory derived from God as its source, not from within himself, therefore suffering its loss when cast from God's presence). Such a contentment in the believer proves God the victor because it is the very life from above in the child of God that sustains and enables him to live in a God glorifying way during sickness/adversity (John 1:12-13; Philipians 4:13).

Secondly, in the specific case where Satan is allowed to attack with sickness and other trials in the believer's life, there is opportunity to make manifest to the angels again that God is the victor over Satan because it is life from above, born of God, that sustains the believer in a fruitful life to God's glory through the attack. *"Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). I believe in Job's case the sickness and other trials were allowed by God to come from Satan in part to prove this point. Satan may very well have been challenging whether the new life Job received from God when he was born

again was able to sustain him through the trial (challenging the Word of God, as he did with Eve). Satan in many ways appears the victor on the earth (Isaiah 14:16-17) but not in the believer when he resists Satan and submits to God (James 4:7-8). Peter says, *"Resist him steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world"* (1 Peter 5:6-11). When the believer moves to do this, he finds that there is a power present within him that enables him to be sustained in a fruitful God-glorifying life in the worst of trials and temptations. Typically, in the midst of adversity, there is the temptation to think inwardly about self instead of God-ward being concerned about His glory instead of self's "needs" being met and self being comforted. Yet, since today's believer has died to self with Christ and has been raised with Christ,

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he can even in the worst of trials seek those things which are above, having a heart and mind set on the Godly perspective instead of the earthly (Colossians 3:1-4). Satan must hate that he does not have power over the believer who, with new life and God's Spirit enabling him, submits to God. His spirit no longer works in the believer, and he cannot devour the believer who resists and submits to God (Eph 2:2; 1:13; 2 Cor 5:15; Rom 8:11). Satan said Job would curse God in his sickness and adversity, but Job did not. Instead, with the same lips

that Satan said Job would curse God with Job said, *"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."* and *"Shall we accept good from God and not accept adversity?"* It is a rhetorical question, but one every believer must come to grips with since *"We are born to troubles as the sparks fly upward"* (Job 1:21; 2:10; 5:7). Well Job's response was not sin but worship. To God be the glory! God gets the glory, not Job and not Satan, because God by His Spirit and new life within Job was the source of Job's strength which resulted in Satan's defeat. Within Job was at work the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (Eph 1:19-20; 3:20 with Phil 2:13; 1 Peter 3:18; Job 1 and 2). Sinner Job stands triumphant where Adam tragically failed. Satan thought Job would be easier since he was simply a member of a fallen race with an inherited sin nature. But Job had what innocent Adam did not, new life from above, heavenly life. As

Job, Paul and the other apostles also found God's grace provision sufficient in sickness and many adversities (2 Cor 12:9-11; 1 Cor 4:9-13—Notice the angels' interest in the apostles' trials in v. 9).

Notice that Job views his trials as being from God. Paul accepted his "thorn in the flesh" as from God also, even though it too was delivered by Satan. Regardless of the instrument of delivery, all adversity must be viewed as from God because, in the least, He allows it, which is key. Simply by nature of Who He is, He does not allow it without purpose or without an aim to be glorified by it. The faith that is unwilling to accept adversity from God (including sickness) will

It is victory once again for God in the angelic conflict as the angels view believers in the midst of trials manifesting the character of Christ (humble and content to desire the will of God above comfort and exaltation as Christ exemplified on earth). This is contrasted with the perverted character of the fallen nature, which is likened to the character of Satan. The believer's new Christ-like character reverses the effects of Satan's "victory" in perverting God's creation in the garden of Eden, annulling it.

not sustain a person through the many inevitable trials of life (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4). Trials for the believer are more the norm than the exception since we are in a sin corrupted body sojourning in a sin corrupted world with Satan on the prowl and where wills are in conflict for the time being (Job 5:7). These trials are also necessary if the believer is to grow into a mature (spiritual) man who desires God above his own will and all else (1 Peter 1:7; Luke 22:42; John 17:4). The position every believer must take is one of humility under the mighty hand and purpose of God, not one of pride, attempting to control and manipulate the mighty hand and purpose of God by simply quoting His own Words back to Him (as if He had a bad memory) in order to get out

of the adversity. We must be content to leave the time of exalting and glory to God instead of demanding it now. God gives grace to the humble but resists the proud (James 4:6-10; Job 22:29; Luke 14:11; Proverbs 29:23). God loves us and knows us perfectly. But if we think that we know best, we have exalted our thoughts above God's. This is pride.

Notice in Daniel chapter 3 that the 3 young men said that even if God did not deliver them physically from their present trial, they would still worship Him alone. Their primary occupation was the worship and glory of the Most High God, not deliverance from their trial. Do you have this same testimony? Notice further that the Lord was with them in the fiery furnace. For them to have not accepted the adversity would have meant them missing an opportunity to be in the Lord's presence and to increase in the true and experiential knowledge of Him (2 Peter 3:18; Colossians 1:9-11). Adversity is opportunity to have intimate relations with Him, that is, to know through experience what it is for Him to be your All in All and to be complete in Him (Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 2:9-10).

As believers in Christ today we have His life and Spirit dwelling within us. Our life is vitally linked with Christ by His Spirit. Jesus said, "I will send you Another Comforter (One come along side to help)." He also says, "My grace will be sufficient for you." Grace is God at work for us (by the finished cross-work of Christ and now by His High Priestly ministry in heaven and future in His return for us to be where He is). Grace is also God at work in us (by His Spirit) to do for us and in us what we cannot do for and in ourselves. By faith in Christ we partake of Him. So we need not faint or fail in the trials of life, including sickness. We can glorify God instead, being content and having a life of worship in all things (Philippians 4:11-13). In so doing, we prove His grace (His working for us and in us) sufficient and victorious over the attacks of Satan, the effects of sin on our

body, and the chastisement of the world (Luke 6:20-25; John 16:33). It is God Who is working out the invisible conflict according to His will not ours. We are merely the vessels of His choosing to magnify His victory over the evil one. What a joy to be His vessel, even a vessel of sickness, pain, or suffering.

All of God's creation should glorify Him because it is an expression of its Creator. However, perverted by sin, it no longer glorifies God as it should. Yet, the new birth recreates the believer, enabling him with a new life and God's Spirit within to once again, amidst a fallen and corrupt creation, fulfill His chief purpose as God's creature (Isaiah 43:7). Man, dead in sin, who repents and believes in Jesus is made

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new in Him, while Satan and his demons remain in their fallen state, condemned without hope (Heb 2:9-16; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:1-10). Thus, it is victory once again for God in the angelic conflict as the angels view believers in the midst of trials manifesting the character of Christ (humble and content to desire the will of God above comfort and exaltation, as Christ exemplified on earth). This is contrasted with the perverted character of the fallen nature, which is likened to the character

of Satan. This reverses the effects of Satan's seeming "victory" in the perverting of God's creation in the garden of Eden, annulling it. Further, this must remind and amplify, as the angels view it, the fact that God has redeemed the visible creation (Rom 8:18-23) but not the invisible (Satan and his demons). Truly, Satan is a defeated foe, and every fruit that the new man in Christ bears is a reminder of this to the visible and invisible creation. Adversity also results in the bearing of more fruit (John 15:2; Heb. 12:11).

My personal testimony is that God has made me very spiritual fruitful in my affliction. Job said to the Lord, "I have heard of thee ... but now I see thee" (Job 42:5-6). As a result of my illnesses and daily adversities in life I have learned experientially (yet have much more to learn) that the Lord is more than sufficient. The lesson and fruit it bears is priceless, incomparable to the "cost" of the trial. I have found Him to be my All in All. I had heard, but now I see clearer than ever that He is and always has been Beautiful Beyond Description. He is more beautiful than any of us know Him to be today. He perfectly satisfies and completes me. Now I love the truth and know it experientially instead of simply inwardly. In light of this, God is more glorified through me and Satan proved the loser as a result of my affliction. Therefore, adversity is not a toil but a joy. Christ is now my life and as death works in me, life works in others. To God be the glory! He is victorious and true! (Gen. 41:51-52; James 1:2; 2 Cor. 4:7-18).

I hope these thoughts will help you to have a true Biblical perspective regarding sickness and adversity so that God's victory over the evil one will be proclaimed through your life and God alone will be glorified as men and angels observe your life through the many trials to come. Remember, "God is good and does good" (Psalm 119:68).

P. S. Two other Captive's Corners give further ways that God is working out the angelic conflict through believers' sickness and adversity. Their titles are "Resurrection" and "The Harder the Training the Stronger the Soldier." God's purpose in resolving the angelic conflict to His glory is not the only reason for believers' sicknesses. At least five other reasons are given in the Captive's Corner "Why Believers Get Sick And Die." For more information on the angels' interest in the church and the glory of God you can read "To God Be The Glory."

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