

CRYSTALLIZATION-STUDY OF JOB PROVERBS ECCLESIASTES, Week 3

KEY STATEMENTS

God's purpose in dealing with those who love Him
is that they may gain Him
to the fullest extent, surpassing the loss
of all that they have other than Him,
so that He might be expressed through them
for the fulfillment of His purpose in creating man.

Job was a good man, expressing himself
in his perfection, uprightness, and integrity,
but God's intention was that Job would be reduced
to nothing, be maintained in his existence,
have God imparted into him, and become
a God-man, expressing the divine attributes.

God's purpose in dealing with His holy people is
that they would be emptied of everything
and receive only God as their gain;
the desire of God's heart
is that they would gain Him in full as life,
as the life supply, and as everything to their being.

When God's chosen and redeemed people
experience Christ as wisdom to them from God
and partake of and enjoy the riches of Christ,
these riches will constitute them the church,
through which the multifarious wisdom of God
is made known to the angelic rulers and authorities in the heavenlies.

**Job's Experience of God's Consuming and Stripping in the Old Testament
Being Far Behind That of Paul in the New Testament**

Scripture Reading: Job 3:1; 2 Cor. 4:10-12, 16-18; Phil. 1:19-25; 4:4

- Job 3:1 After this Job opened his mouth and **cursed the day of his birth.**
- 2 Corinthians 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be **manifested** in our body.
- 2 Corinthians 4:11 For we who are alive are **always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake** that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- 2 Corinthians 4:12 So then death operates in us, but **life** in you.
- 2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet **our inner man is being renewed day by day.**
- 2 Corinthians 4:17 For our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an **eternal weight of glory,**
- 2 Corinthians 4:18 Because we do not regard the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the **things which are not seen are eternal.**
- Philippians 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to **salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,**

- Philippians 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now **Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.**
- Philippians 1:21 For to me, **to live is Christ and to die is gain.**
- Philippians 1:22 But if I am to live in the flesh, if this to me is fruit for my work, then I do not know what I will choose.
- Philippians 1:23 But I am constrained between the two, having the desire to depart and **be with Christ**, for this is far better;
- Philippians 1:24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.
- Philippians 1:25 And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith,
- Philippians 4:4 **Rejoice** in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

Day 1

- I. Job was **disturbed, perplexed, and entangled** to the uttermost by his suffering of the disasters that befell his possessions and his children and the plague on his body, in spite of his perfection, uprightness, and integrity:**
- When **Job cursed** the day of his birth, equivalent to cursing his mother, he surely was not perfect and upright, nor did he hold his integrity; rather, he became bankrupt in integrity— Job 3:1.
 - God's intention was to **tear down the natural Job** in his perfection and uprightness that He might build up a **renewed Job in God's nature and attributes** in order to make Job a man of God, constituted with God according to His economy; such a man (like Paul) would never be entangled by any troubles and problems so that he would curse his birth and prefer to die rather than to live— Phil. 1:19-25; 4:5-9.
 - Job** was **dwelling on his excellent past and sighing over his miserable present** (Job 29:1—30:31); he held fast insistently to, and even boasted of, his uprightness, righteousness, integrity, and perfection (27:1-7; 31:1-40):
 - Paul**, however, **exercised to forget** the things that were behind in the past in order to **gain the present** "today Christ" to the fullest extent—Phil. 3:8, 13-14.
 - Furthermore, **Paul** was not a person of yesterday but a **person of today** (Heb. 3:7-8, 15; Psa. 95:7-8); we should not look ahead to the future and not look back to the past; we are people of today (Matt. 6:11, 33-34; Luke 19:9-10; 23:43).
 - The Christ whom we love is the **Christ now**, the **Christ today**, and the **Christ on the throne** in the heavens, who is our daily salvation and moment-by-moment supply, sustaining us to live a heavenly life on earth—Matt. 28:20; 1 Pet. 1:8; Heb. 8:2; 4:14-15; 7:26; 2 Cor. 6:2; Rom. 5:10.
 - When we fully become the New Jerusalem, we will have today since every day in eternity is today; the only day we have is today, not tomorrow.

SIGHING OVER HIS MISERABLE PRESENT

After dwelling on his excellent past, Job in chapter thirty **sighed over his miserable present**. Job said that those who were younger than he held him in **derision** and that others made him a **byword**, **abhorred** him, and **stood aloof from him, casting off restraint** in his presence. Next, Job said that **terrors** had turned upon him, that his **prosperity had passed away** like a cloud, that his **soul was poured out** within him, and that days of **affliction** had taken hold of him. Job continued by saying that he cried to God, but God did not answer him. According to Job's feeling, God had turned to become cruel to him. Job said to Him, "I know that You will bring me into death, /And to the house appointed for all living" (v. 23). Job also sighed over the fact that when he expected good, evil came, and when he waited for light, darkness came. Job concluded by saying that his inward parts were in turmoil, that days of affliction had drawn near to him, and that his harp had become mourning and his pipe, the voice of those who weep. Here we see a picture of Job's sufferings.

Job did not understand the reason for his sufferings, but today we know the reason. It was true that Job suffered, but his suffering was allowed by God for a **purpose**. God wanted to take away all his successes. Job was very successful, both materially and ethically. He had attained to a very high degree of perfection and uprightness. That was his integrity, and he was proud of it. Job considered his perfection and integrity as a robe to cover him and as a turban to glorify him (29:14). However, **God took these away in order that Job would pursue God Himself instead of other things**, yet Job did not understand. He thought that he was right and that God had done something wrong toward him. Therefore, he was hoping to have an opportunity to present his case before God. From this we can see that Job was altogether in another realm, one which was contrary to God's desire.

Eventually, Job recognized that he had known God only "**by the hearing of the ear**" (42:5a). He had heard about God and he had believed in God, but he had never seen God. However, through all the **strippings** and **consumings**, the time came when Job **saw** God (42:5b). (*Life-Study of Job, chapter 21*)

Day 2

- D. Through his eight times of speaking to his three friends, Job **exposed himself** as a person with the following characteristics:
1. Job was **self-righteous** (Job 6:30; 9:20; 27:5-6; 32:1); he was **darkened by the success and attainments** of his natural being, contented with what he had become, yet he was unaware of his miserable situation before God (cf. Phil. 3:9; Rev. 3:17-18).
 2. Job acknowledged God in name but **not in reality**; he was **not** saturated by God, filled with God, and mingled with God to become one with God—Psa. 92:10; Lev. 2:4-5; Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Cor. 6:17; Eph. 3:19; 5:18, 26; Heb. 2:10-11.
 3. Job **did not possess any element** that indicated some aspect and some feature of the **New Jerusalem** as God's organism to live God and to express God for eternity; in contrast to this, the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the name of the Lord are written upon the overcomer, indicating that what God is, the nature of the New Jerusalem, and the person of the Lord have all been wrought into the overcomer— Rev. 3:12.
- E. **Neither Job nor his friends knew the purpose of God's dealing with him**, as the apostle Paul did in declaring to the New Testament believers that the affliction the believers are suffering works out for them an eternal weight of glory, which is the God of glory to be their glorious portion for them to gain and enjoy unto eternity—2 Cor. 4:17.

Day 3

- F. **If Job and his friends had taken the time to seek God** in a spirit of humility and by exercising their spirit in prayer (Isa. 57:15; 66:2; Col. 4:2), God could have shown them that a regenerated, transformed, and glorified saint in Christ has nothing to do with the natural man and does not need to build up himself with the natural virtues.
- G. This heavenly vision would have saved them from the time-wasting, pain-increasing, and vain debates in thirty-five chapters as a record of a group of blind persons groping in darkness; they talked about God and also referred to their spirit (Job 32:8), but they **exercised their mind** in three rounds of long debates instead of exercising their spirit to pray for Job and to fellowship with one another so that all of them could touch God and receive God as their life, light, and spiritual supply:
1. If we are going to have vital groups, we must be warned by these talks in the book of Job; the group we see in the book of Job affords us a negative example; it is the kind of group meeting we should not have in the church life today; the first thing that we must do when we come together is to **exercise our spirit to pray**; the vital groups are groups of vital prayer— cf. Acts 12:5, 11-12; Heb. 10:24-25; 3:13.
 2. The groups are vital in these two spirits—**vital in our human spirit** and **vital in God's divine Spirit**; the Christian life is a life of the consummated Spirit as the consummation of the Triune God dwelling in and mingled with our regenerated spirit to be one spirit— John 4:24; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 3:14; 6:18.
 3. We need to learn to **touch the divine Spirit in our spirit**; this is the intrinsic significance of the Christian life and work; this is the move of God in man and the move of man in God to fulfill His economy, His plan, to dispense Himself in Christ as the Spirit into man in order to build up His Body and prepare His bride to consummate the New Jerusalem—2 Cor. 2:13; Phil. 3:3; Rom. 1:9.
 4. Paul stresses in the book of Romans that whatever we are (2:29; 8:5-6, 9), whatever we have (vv. 10, 16), and whatever we do toward God (1:9; 7:6; 8:4; 12:11) **must be in our spirit**; we must be perfected and built up to be persons in the spirit; there is no other way to be a lover of God, to be a seeker of Christ, or to be an overcomer than to be in the spirit (Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN CHRIST AND GAIN

In verse 21 Paul says, *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* In this verse we have a contrast between Christ and gain. Some may think that the gain here refers to Christ. Although in a sense it may refer to Christ, it refers to Christ in a different way, not to the Christ we experience by living Him. In a practical way, the gain in verse 21 is the **presence of Christ**. When Paul said, *“To die is gain,”* he meant that **to die is to enjoy Christ's presence in a better way**. In verse 23 Paul says that his desire is to depart and to be with Christ. **To be with Christ is a matter of degree**, not of place. While **Paul was desiring to be with Christ in a higher degree, he was already with Him continually**. Through his physical death, he would be with Christ to a fuller extent than he enjoyed in this earthly life.

Do you intend just to practice the presence of Christ, or is it your desire also to live Christ? To live the Lord is even better than to be with the Lord. Yes, it is a gain to die and be with the Lord in a greater degree than on earth. But it is even better to **live Him while we are on earth**. Probably you have thanked the Lord for His presence, but have you ever thanked Him for the experience of living Him? It is easy for us to thank the Lord for the sweetness and loveliness of His presence. Many have the habit of doing this. Sometimes when I am about to utter such a thanksgiving to the Lord, I have the conviction within that I am simply following an Old Testament practice. I am then reminded of my need to live Christ. First Corinthians 6:17 says, *“He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”* **We are one spirit with the Lord not only that we may enjoy His presence, but even more that we live Him**. But what Christians today are being instructed and helped to live Christ? For years we have been helped to develop the habit of practicing the Lord's presence. This experience is on the first floor of the Christian life. Now in the Lord's recovery we must go on to the second floor, to the practice of living Christ. (*Life-Study of Philippians, chapter 7*)

Day 4

II. Job's experience of God's **consuming and stripping** in the Old Testament was **far behind** that of Paul in the New Testament—1 Tim. 1:16:

- A. **God's consuming** is to **exhaust us**, and **God's stripping** is to **tear down and take away the totality of our natural integrity**—our natural perfection and uprightness in our character—that replaces our living out Christ to express Christ—Phil. 1:19-20; 3:4-9a.
- B. Day by day and hour by hour, **Job** was **unhappily being consumed**, but in the New Testament, God's consuming and stripping become pleasant things; since the day he was converted, **Paul** was a person **under God's consuming and stripping as a prisoner in the Lord, but he was filled with joy and rejoicing**—Acts 9:15-16; 2 Cor. 4:16; Phil. 1:19-21a; Eph. 3:1; 4:1; Phil. 1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 17-18, 28-29; 3:1; 4:1, 4.
- C. **Paul was crucified with Christ**; to be reborn through termination and germination is to be regenerated crucified (John 3:5; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12); we, like Paul, were reborn crucified for the purpose that from that time it would be no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20).
- D. Now in our Christian life we are dying to live (v. 20; 1 Cor. 15:31, 36; John 12:24; 2 Cor. 4:11); **dying to live is the proper meaning of bearing the cross** (Matt. 16:24-26; Hymns, #622).

REGENERATED CRUCIFIED AND DYING TO LIVE

We are regenerated crucified and are dying to live. We were born dead, and now we are dying to live. **Dying to live means to live under the crucifixion of Christ**. Every day we are dying. Paul says that he died daily (v. 31; 2 Cor. 4:11). Our environment is putting us to death every day. Our dying is a continuous matter. The Christian life is a long life of dying. Every day we die to live. We were reborn crucified, and now we are dying to live. This is a living under the crucifixion of Christ. In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith." On the one hand, Paul had been **terminated**, but on the other hand, a **resurrected** Paul, one who had been **regenerated**, still **lived**. Paul had been **crucified with Christ, yet Christ lived in him and he lived Christ** (Phil. 1:21a). Christ and Paul had one life and one living. (*The Christian Life, Chapter 12*)

Day 5

- E. In his experience of God's consuming and stripping, **Paul was not constricted** under the pressures on every side and did not perish despite his being cast down; Paul **did not curse the day of his birth**, and he did not say that he preferred to die rather than to live; on the contrary, after much consideration Paul said that he still preferred **to live for the saints' progress** (their growth in life) and for **their joy of the faith** (their enjoyment of Christ)—2 Cor. 1:8-9; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21-25.
- F. When **Paul** was suffering distresses for the sake of Christ (2 Cor. 12:10), he was **well pleased**, he was **happy**, and he was even **rejoicing** in the Lord for his experiences (Col. 1:24; Phil. 2:17-18).
- G. **Paul wanted to know Christ**, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings in order to be conformed to Christ's death (3:10); he took Christ's death as a mold for his life, and it was his great pleasure to be molded in the death of Christ.
- H. **Paul magnified Christ by living Him**, whether through life or through death, by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; when God created man, this was the kind of life He wanted man to live—1:19-21a; Gen. 1:26.
- I. **Paul** said that he was **always bearing about in the body the putting to death, the killing, of Jesus and being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake** that the life of Jesus might be manifested in his mortal flesh; when we are under the killing of the Lord's death, His resurrection life is imparted through us into others—2 Cor. 4:10-12:
 1. The putting to death of Jesus in our environment **cooperates** with the indwelling Spirit to kill our natural man (our outer man), comprising our body and our soul; as our outer man is being consumed by the killing work of death, our inner man is being renewed day by day with the fresh supply of the resurrection life—v. 16.
 2. **Paul** said that **he died daily** (1 Cor. 15:31); daily he risked death, faced death, and **died to self** (2 Cor. 11:23; 4:11; 1:8-9; Rom. 8:36).
 3. The application of Christ's death and its effectiveness is in the compounded Spirit, who dwells in our spirit to **dispense Christ's death and its effectiveness from our spirit to our soul and even to our mortal body**—Exo. 30:22-25; Rom. 8:6, 9-11.
 4. This dispensing is the anointing (1 John 2:20, 27), and the anointing is the moving of the indwelling Spirit; our **prayer** activates the moving of the indwelling Spirit, and within this moving, there is the killing power.

Day 6

- J. In his experience of God's consuming and stripping, **Paul** said that our **momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory**; eternal is in contrast to momentary, weight is in contrast to lightness, and glory is in contrast to affliction—2 Cor. 4:16-17; Rom. 8:28-29.
- K. **Job considered his suffering of affliction something very heavy**, but **Paul considered his affliction to be momentary and light**; instead of caring about our affliction, we need to care for the increase of God as the weight of glory within us by our being transformed from one degree of glory to another; as long as we have more of God in us, this is what really matters—Acts 7:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 2:19:
1. Like **Paul**, we are in an environment of suffering and pressure that **works with the Spirit to kill our natural man**; we should cooperate with the indwelling Spirit and accept the outward environment in our spirit, soul, and body, because we do not regard the things of temporary affliction which are seen but the things of the eternal glory which are not seen— Phil. 1:19-20; 2 Cor. 4:18; Heb. 11:1, 27; 2 Cor. 5:7.
 2. We need to **exercise our spirit to rejoice in the midst of our killing environment** (Phil. 4:4); the Lord's sovereignty is operating to put us under the killing of Christ's death so that His life may be manifested in our body in the renewing of our inner man to make us as new as the New Jerusalem (2 Cor. 4:10-12, 16; 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Rev. 21:2, 5, 10).

OUR OLD MAN (THE OUTER MAN) TO BE CONSUMED, BUT OUR NEW MAN (THE INNER MAN) TO BE RENEWED DAY BY DAY

God's economy is to have our **old man** (the outer man) **consumed** and our **new man** (the inner man) **renewed day by day** (2 Cor. 4:16). Being consumed is not the same as being killed. A person may be killed instantly, but the consuming of our old man is a long process that requires many years. I have been in this process for nearly seventy years; nevertheless, the consuming of my old man has not yet been consummated.

Every day in the church life we are being consumed. This consuming is our being molded, or conformed, to the death of Christ (Phil. 3:10c). In making cakes, dough is put into a mold and pressed into the mold. In this way the dough is conformed to the form of the mold. If the mold is in the image of a fish, the dough that is pressed into this mold will be conformed to the shape of a fish. **The death of Christ is our mold**, and we are the dough. Since the day we were saved, we became the dough. This dough is made of fine flour from wheat. Christ is the fine flour for us to be made the dough.

God has put us all into the mold of Christ's death. The death to which we are being conformed is not Adam's death but **Christ's death**. The death of Christ is a particular death. Out of millions and even billions of deaths, only Christ's death is a particular death. From the time that we became dough, God put us into this death (Rom. 6:4), considering this death as a mold. **Day by day and year after year God is molding us to conform us to this death.**

On the one hand, we are happy in the recovery and in the church life, but on the other hand, deep within we are suffering here. However, we have no way to escape. Every day we are being molded. When we come to the dining table to eat, we may not like the food that has been prepared for us. This is part of the mold, the mold of the death of Christ. Marriage too is a part of this mold. Marriage is used very much by the Lord to conform the married ones to the death of Christ. (*The Christian Life, chapter 16*)