

## Taking the High Ground

In war, victory is secured by overrunning the position of the enemy through effectual deployment of superior tactics and weaponry. When new recruits are preparing for battle they are under rigorous training that will enable them success when faced with a less prepared and equipped enemy. Throughout History men have sought to improve the Tools of war such as the chariot and the sword, also the various articles of protective clothing worn by the soldier. When the believer is prepared by the word of God and is functioning at a maximum level of faith there is no injustice in life able to break the believer's confidence: 2Sam 22:30-40. This unshakable attitude can not go unnoticed by Men, Angels -elect or fallen- and, of course, God who will take this person into blessings that stagger the imagination: Eph 3:20. Those believers in Jesus Christ interested in giving glory to God surrender their life to Him avoiding compromises to the relationship. As a believer receives more and more from the Word of God there will be more and more expected because greater opportunities are given from God. The blessings that go along with progressive stages of obedience cannot be withheld by any force of evil from the enemy: Jer 20:11.

War can be a very ugly experience and few come out of it the same person they were before: 1Peter 1:7. When we pass the tests in the Christian life we are better off than before, but if we fail we will experience delays leading to the onset of frustration and discouragement. God has not intended for us to have a frustrating life. Ideally God provided us a life that can anticipate Victory and the resultant blessings. He desires all believers to have better blessings; yet only those who are willing to play by the rules will have the honors of success: 2Tim 2:5. Those who fail to obey God will inevitably bear the shame of their behavior before going to heaven. When a believer hates his old life then there is hope of turning all the failures into success. We need to learn to set aside our own agenda, submit to God, learn His ways and do them even if it appears as though we could lose our life by doing so: Mark 8:34-35. Unless the rapture occurs first we are all going to die physically so the issue is how do we behave and what do we do before our death: Eph 5:15-17.

The pattern of all advancement God wants us to experience is observed in the life of Jesus Christ: Matt 17:5; Eph 4:13. The scripture indicates there is always the opportunity to serve God: Luke 1:74. God is calling many; but few are chosen because there is unwillingness to uphold the truth: Matt 22:8-14. First we learn truth so we can learn to live by the truth. If the believer is willing to endure the discipline of the Lord then invariably God will use this person for His own Glory: Acts 22:10, 9:15-16. When a believer is willing to endure these inevitable sufferings then he or she will be a beneficiary in the Glories of God: 1Sam 2:30; Rom 8:17. 2Tim 2:12.

There are two main types of suffering that we receive in the Christian life: deserved and underserved. Deserved Suffering is God's discipline coming to us through Corrective Suffering and Preventive Suffering:

Corrective suffering is applied to us as the penalty for our sin: 2Sam 7:14; Prov 3:11-12. In the world are systems of authority: Parents authority over their children teaching them to respect the civil authorities, Teachers, Law enforcement, Governments, etcetera. Through these systems of authority, we receive praise for doing good, and reprimand and punishment for wrongdoing and evil. God has no problem using these systems to bless and to curse whomever He pleases: Rom 13:3-5. Preventive suffering is a deterrent in order not to fall in sin: 2Cor 12:7; which in the case of the apostle prevented him from getting arrogant. Testing and discipline from the Lord is there to turn our attention to His truth: we cannot please Him unless we live in truth: 3John 1:4. The strait and narrow path has a barb wire fence on both sides: If we go to the right or the left it's going to hurt. To avoid this type of suffering the believer must train their eyes on Jesus. God provides for us Weapons of righteousness to overcome our enemies: 2Cor 6:7. Eph 6:13-18: these enemies being the world: John 15:19; Sgo 4:4; 1John 2:15-16, the flesh: Rom 13:14; 2Cor 10:3-4; Gal 5:16-17, and the devil: Matt 13:39; Eph 4:27, 6:11-12; James 4:7.

Undeserved suffering comprehends the series of sufferings common to all men, specifically certain sufferings with no apparent personal causes, like physical and mental illnesses, financial problems, environmental damages, etcetera. Yet there are undeserved sufferings experienced in relation to faith in Christ and correspond to a life that is advancing spiritually. Let us take just two or three examples: (1) when a believer suffers unjustly at work from a superior and has to bear up with it: 1Peter 2:18-23; (2) whenever the believer chooses to suffer instead of sinning in any form: Heb 11:25; and (3), Job's sufferings, a typical example of undeserved suffering or faith testing faced before the devil's beatings and his own friends' erroneous judgments. We can see how all of Job's sufferings in the end resulted in blessings from the Lord: James 5:11; Job 42:10-17.

Certainly, in the path of advancement there is injustice and justice. The last hours for Jesus are characterized by a succession of injustices: betrayal by an insider, being arrested by the authorities though innocent of any wrongdoing, accused of things that were not true, received beatings because of lies, declared innocent then exchanged for a criminal that was set free and Jesus led away to be beaten and crucified. There could be no greater succession of injustices considering Jesus was perfect; and to top off all of this the Father had to cast the sins of all Humanity upon Him and judged them in Him: Isaiah 53:5; 1Peter 2:24. In Jesus' most grim hour it even was appearing as though the Father had broken fellowship with the Son: Mark 15:34; Psalms 22:1. Yet through all this Jesus was not bitter or resentful toward us or His Father. What appeared to be a grand injustice purchased us out of spiritual death and brought us into God's life. Some of these things Jesus was able to anticipate because of the Holy Spirit: Matt 26:2; yet it's evident that He was not provided with every detail destiny would have Him face: Matt 27:46; despite this, His confidence remained focused on the Father: Luke 23:46. This same focus will be required of us despite the encounter of tests that we could not possibly anticipate. We are to maintain constant vigilance keeping our eyes on the ways of Jesus despite any opposition heading our direction: Heb 12:2.

The Word of God promises there will be greater blessings for those willing to imitate Jesus or even the Apostle Paul: John 12:26; 2Tim 4:7-8. A startling discovery in the scripture discloses that in order to be glorified in the likeness of Jesus Christ one must be willing to endure suffering involving various assaults of injustice. The point is we are blessed by God by maintaining the correct attitude regardless the injustice: Rom 8:17; 1Peter 4:12-14. Looking at much of what the bible displays about these sufferings will be the major focus of this study. Also the counter measures we are to take in order to maintain direction and strength despite the opposition. We will also be looking at the results of our own failure and the appropriate measures to take in order to resume an advance; also, displaying the various tools of deception used by our number one enemy, Satan.

Our life for God on earth can also be visualized as a game that is operating within the limits of time; there being rules and boundaries to the playing area. The idea here is we need to be on the field to win the Game. We need to be at the field at the right time and we need to stay there to the finish to receive the prize: 1Cor 9:24. Another very important element that is essential for success is knowing the enemy and being able to anticipate the inevitable. It is not a matter of “if” but “when” will the enemy attack: Luke 4:13; 2Cor 2:11; 1Peter 5:8-9. Being prepared is essential for success. The surprise attack is the most common and effective tool the enemy uses to destabilize us. Once we have had a series of successes related to conventional weaponry there will be necessity to deploy more sophisticated tactics in order to maintain the advantage. Because we will not be tested beyond what we have been prepared; our failures can only be blamed on lax preparation; although the recourses were available that would have ensured success: 1Cor 10:13; James 1:5-8. Many of the challenges we face as adolescence believers will have a safety net enabling many chances to develop our skills for the real battle, the one that’s really going to count: Judges 3:1-4; 1Sam 17:32-37.

As a spiritual adult, the tests that come along can really hurt us and others if there’s failure: 1Sam 28:15-19 —and chapter 31. At this point, there can be a lot to lose; even to the extent that we are taken captive to do the will of Satan: Lam 1:3-5; 2Tim 2:26. If we are released from one of these situations by God, it is likely that thereafter we will choose obedience and vigilance over sin; therefore, taking God and our Spiritual life with Him more seriously. Often Believers will be given these second and third chances in the adult spiritual life: God is interested in receiving a return on His investment: purchasing us out of the slave market of sin: Titus2:14; 1Peter 2:9-10. He is interested in us seeing and enjoying the benefits of this plan He has for our life: Deut 5:33; Prov 3:13-26; Eph 1. When we function on the level of His integrity, it is pleasing to Him and gives Him satisfaction: Deut 5:9-10; 1Thes 4:1. This is the point in which we are given opportunity to give glory to God and determining the extent of glory we’re to receive in Heaven: 2Cor 5:9-10.

From this point, we will be examining all that the bible displays shedding light on all that has been previously mentioned in brief. First of all, one of the most important things to know is our battle is not against flesh and blood: Eph 6:12: this is to mean that only what is of thought can represent hostility towards God. Although there are those who war

against the flesh they can only kill the flesh but not the truth or the lie: Luke 12:4. The truth can kill the lie but the lie cannot kill the truth: 2Cor 13:8. So those in charge of the word of God can point out that which is good. We are not allowed to be judgmental; judgmental means being destructively critical whereas the truth is constructive when coupled with love: James 2:13; Eph 4:15. Truth without love is only Knowledge, and deception cannot love but only promote itself. Truth and love from God have a target that He wants to hit in the right place at the right time: Psalms 89:14; 1Cor 9:26. Some truth can be set aside and there still be Love but you cannot set aside love and experience the truth. The more one comes to know the love of God, the more a person is able to decipher; yet this ability can be shut down in a second. So, if there are any feelings of superiority in a person's heart, their perspective has been greatly reduced: 1Cor 8:2-3; Prov 14:16. Nothing big can happen until this vision is restored: Rev 3:18(d). We cannot feel as though we are superior to anyone: Phil 2:3, no, not even Satan. We cannot hate Satan: Jude 1:8-10; if we do, then we have been persuaded to hate a person. If Satan can persuade us to hate him then we can be persuaded to hate others. Oh, yes, we can hate the lie: Psalms 119:163, 120:2-4; Prov 12:22: all the sins of the world including the lies of the world were cast down on Jesus and judged in Him. The certificate of debt was nailed to the cross once and for all: Col 2:13-14. So, we as believers have to love everybody even if they are going to hurt us; and they will: Matt 5:39; Luke 6:27; 2Tim 3:12. The fact is that our sins at some time have hurt others too; so we should have no complaint. God will make this very thing into a success; but if we are holding to partialities and are making distinctions amongst ourselves then we are the most to be pitied because Christ died for our sins and theirs. We should not have a critical eye concerning the sins of others. When people sin against us and we afford them grace and mercy in return then we will be blessed receiving favor from God: 1Peter 2:20, 3:14, 4:14.

The Church lives among the deceptions of the world; we are to wash ourselves of these things. To say or think: "We will" —or "I will not be— deceived" means that we are close to falling: 1Cor 10:12. One man's strengths are another man's weakness; if we had all the same weaknesses then we would not have someone to help us out of our problem. So, to think we don't need each other is to deny the truth. God is causing us to know that we need each other: 1Cor 12:14-22. We are all from the darkness: we know this only if we have seen the light. If we have seen the light, we cannot bear the darkness any longer. Now we need to feed off the light in order to feel alive; yet we can still feel and see the death in our members. So, if we are to be free of this, we allow ourselves to be washed by one another: Eph 5:8-17; Heb 3:12-13. Love is the biggest miracle: Col 3:14; 1Peter 4:8.

There are false signs and wonders; there needs to be, because the bible said there would be these things: Matt 24:24. The arch enemies of Jesus and the Apostles were not able to dispute the credibility of the miracles that were happening through them: Acts 4:16. These undisputable miracles are designed to promote faith in the word of God: John 20:30-31; Acts 8:5-13, 14:3; Rom 15:18-19; whereas deception draws attention to the deception, inadvertently promoting speculation and doubt; yet these things are part of the equation: "*we know darkness because of the light and we know light because of the darkness*". In the garden of Eden there was no differentiation between the two before Eve was deceived: Gen 2:25; she could not decipher the realities of her disobedience to God

until after the fact of sin entering into the world: Gen 3:7. Before the original sin, man only knew of the light; yet God knew the light and the darkness. As Christians, we know of the darkness and of the light also. Through Spiritual growth we learn to decipher between good and evil: Heb 5:14. We are to draw to what is good; but, Do we separate ourselves from the world? No, we can't do that; but as Christians we are to judge amongst ourselves so we can present ourselves to the world without hypocrisy: the world gets to judge what they see; and we present ourselves as being sent from God so that our light might be beheld among men: Acts 24:16; Matt 5:13-16; Eph 5:6-14. The world chooses to either love us, drawing to the light, or hate us, drawing deeper into the darkness hiding from the light: John 3:19-21.

Yet if there is any fear among us then we are restrained from the bigger things that God wants: 1John 4:18, 5:14-15; so, the sheep remain scattered; there needs to be reformation/truth before there can be the greater unity. Pontius Pilate being astute said, "*What is truth?*": John 18:38(a); but was only seeking to justify himself. We cannot justify ourselves with the truth but the truth can justify us: 2Cor 13:8. We can seek to be justified by the word of God; this is seeking the truth. We need to remove the log out of our own eye before we can take the chip out of the eye of others; and if we are practicing any type of deception without knowing it, then we carry the stumbling block with us: therefore, we have something that will make it hard for others to believe we are for real even though we are in fact for real. The shepherds need to wash each other and then they need to tend and wash their sheep accordingly: John 13:14-15; Rom 15:14; Jer 23:4; John 21:17. Then there will be unity in the great congregation: Eph 4:1-16.

These things that are false can be identified by the doubt: if we have doubts about it, then God is saying *no* about it. The idea is: no matter how hard we try to have confidence about it: it is not 100% confidence. We should only do things we have 100% confidence about: Prov 14:26; Isaiah 32:17; 2Cor 1:12, 15. If we don't understand the scripture about something then we should not be doing it. Faith is from God and it seeks to glorify Him, not self: we may be impressed with ourselves, but other people are not edified because it can't be confirmed, leading only to speculation and division: Rom 14:20-23. Everything God does is easily confirmed: by a close examination of the scriptures the counterfeit can be detected: Acts 17:11; 2Sam 22:31. Without true love and honesty, deception will prevail: a little leaven leavens the whole lump: 1Cor 5:6-8.

It can appear as though there would be something to lose if a situation were to be confronted. So, the result beyond stagnation is things not making as much sense as they used to. Another way to put it is things are darkened by failing to take the next step that God was trying to show us. Now a delay is in the making: almost every leader sooner or later will disregard certain information that God is trying to give in order to bless him further. So one of the greatest commands that the Bible states is for us not to regard a brother with contempt and/or disregard: Rom 14:1-13; James 4:11-12: if we think a brother has gone astray we should confront the person and let them know about it: Matt 18:15. If we don't... well; then this is the witness that we really don't love; we are just seeking our own things and not those of God: Lev 19:17; Eze 3:18; Gal 6:1; Phil 2:21. Sooner or later almost every leader will be caught in this scenario and the whole ministry

will appear to stall out and slow to a halt. This ultimately affects a group (by the misstep of the leader) yet the congregation is unaware of the situation; so, the solution is between the Pastor and God. In some cases, the Lord will be using this pastor to have an influence on a circle of pastors once the information is received.

The following scenarios represent the traps that the flesh, the world and the devil can create for us: For the youth in Christ there can be no greater success than rendering obedience to parents; good behavior will be greatly rewarded by the Lord: Eph 6:1-3. Children that rebel are guaranteed a life of misery until they are willing to submit to the will of God for their Life: Prov 28:24. Children that are raised in a house of debauchery are afforded the same opportunities by God as those appearing to have the greater advantages. The point is that God and His people are able to see that a rescue operation is in order. Other children God will be taking them home to be with Him because of poverty and injustice. The point is there is no poverty, injustice, or death that comes to a child that escapes the notice and justice of God. These will be received into the kingdom of God with special honors: Luke 18:16. On the other hand, when we are aware of the suffering of others, we are bound by the word of God to make a provision for these persons not withholding any of the good they desire and deserve. We are even indebted by the word of God to feed our enemies if the opportunity presents itself: Prov 25:21-22; Rom 12:20. We're not to withhold good from anyone; it is always an opportunity to help our fellow man. We should give according to our own standard of measure. He who gives to the Poor is lending to the Lord. The Christian can't afford to fail in respect to giving generously. So, the conclusion here is that our flesh will tempt us through greed not to give liberally; we are to ignore this temptation in order to be pleasing to God and man: 2Cor 8 and 9; Prov 3:27-28; Deut 15:7-11 Psalms 112.

Taking the high ground means we've become that great and bright city upon the mountain being seen by all around us. Means we will have accomplished the will of God for our lives to the praise of His Glory in this world, the world He Himself enlightened by sending us His Son Jesus Christ:

*Mark 4:13-16*

*and leaving Nazareth, He [Jesus] came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.*

*{This was} to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:*

*"THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI, BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES—*

*"THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED."*

*Mathew 5:14-16*

*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;*

*nor does {anyone} light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*

*"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

*2Corinthians 4:6*

*For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*