

WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: SECTION THREE

Three Responses Which Empower the Sufferer – Introduction

We now know that belief in the promises of God is essential for a Christian facing the challenge of adversity. However, the Word of God makes it clear that faith isn't merely a theoretical abstraction. Instead, it is portrayed throughout Scripture as the tangible expression of a lifestyle which reflects an inner belief system. Therefore, the necessary corollary to faith in the promises of God, consists of a commitment to obedience regarding the imperatives which He has issued to us as His people. Spiritual development does not happen without this interaction between what we believe and how we behave; especially during times of trial. When the believer does his part, God will most certainly do His, providing us with supernatural empowerment.

Without obedience, very few positives will be experienced in the life of the Christian. When we do obey, God's power is activated on our behalf. As this obedience/empowerment dynamic takes place, so will personal development and eventual usefulness for spiritual accomplishments. This is especially true when we are going through a time of suffering, where the temptation toward disobedience is great, making the response of obedience all the more critical. Faith in the promises of God, coupled with a commitment to obedience no matter what, becomes the coping mechanism for successfully emerging from the most difficult times of life.

The obedience/empowerment dynamic is mentioned throughout Psalm 119, where the emphasis is upon an uncompromising commitment to the Word of God. In v10, knowing that he has fulfilled his part in the process, the psalmist pleads with God to do His part, when he says, "With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments." In v35, the same sentiment is communicated in a more positive manner: "Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it." The need for empowerment is passionately made known in vv86-88, with the context of the request being that of adversity: "All your commandments are faithful; they have persecuted me with a lie; help me! They almost destroyed me on earth, but as for me, I did not forsake Your precepts. Revive me according to Your lovingkindness, so that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth." In v92, he reflects upon the negative consequence of failing to obey: "If Your law had not been my delight, then I would have perished in my affliction." Toward the end of the psalm, the author conveys his unwavering resolve to be obedient, even during a time of difficulty. In v143 he writes: "Trouble and anguish have come upon me, yet Your commandments are my delight."

A high level of commitment on the part of the psalmist is also balanced by a deep level of dependence upon God and not self, for a strength that is not his own, which only God can provide. Therefore, in verse 153, the psalmist's obedience is verbalized in a spirit of dependence: "Look upon my affliction and rescue me, for I do not forget Your law." Throughout Psalm 119, the obedience/empowerment dynamic is repeated, with an emphasis on its role in dealing with adversity. As we consider the importance of obedience to God during such a time, three specific expressions of this all-important attitude are necessary, if we are to not only survive but experience spiritual success when suffering. They are: submission/forgiveness/trust.