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Who Is In Charge?

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As we are witnessing with the coronavirus, unexpected events shake our sense of stability and normalcy. Predictability is comforting, and it also creates the illusion that we are in control of our lives, our environment, our economies, etc. Those without a strong faith in God might feel that things are spinning out of control, that they are on a wild roller coaster ride – without a seat belt.

Job was perplexed by the things that befell him – sudden, catastrophic, unexpected loss. Terrible tragedy, disorienting events, death, sickness, doubts, false accusations and abandonment – all these came flooding into his life and mind.

After Job exploring the matter intellectually with his “friends” and reaching no rational explanation for what had befallen him, God finally intervenes with a series of challenges on His creative power and maintenance of the world. He asks Job: “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know!” (Job 38:2-5).

God is both chiding and informing Job about His handling of the world. He continues in this vein for four chapters, reaffirming in Job’s mind that no matter how things may look from a superficial standpoint, He knows how to superintend the world.

We need to be confident of this same truth today as the world faces a pandemic, the economy is sagging, normal life events have been interrupted and even our common social habits are suspended (displays of greeting, affection, etc.). We should not sorrow or fear “as others who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13) or others who have no confidence in our Lord who reigns over all at the right hand of God.

God allows human free will to operate within the overall bounds that He sets; He is ultimately in control and He has reasons for allowing catastrophes to happen. I suspect we are all examining our commitments and motives to the Lord more closely than we have in a long time. This is a good outcome of a regrettable situation.

Hope Abides

L.A. Stauffer

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). And now, during earth life, it is man’s season of hope—a time when man looks to but sees not the reward his Maker has promised. “Hope,” Paul writes, “that is seen is not hope: for who hopes for that which he sees” (Romans 8:24). It is “now,” the apostle says, that hope “abides” (1 Corinthians 13:13). Hope only abides when there is the reality of a reward and there is a longing expectation of that reward in the heart of a man. Take away the “mansion” in heaven that Jesus promised or the assurance of that abiding place in a man’s faith—and you no longer have hope (see Hebrews 11:1). Hope is a reality because of man’s expectant trust and God’s faithful promise. Hope abides because:

God Promised. Hope rests and is founded on God's promise. He it is who announced through Jesus, "great is your reward in heaven" and "in my Father's house are many mansions" (Matthew 5:12; John 14:1-2). The Hebrews writer takes his readers back to the time of Abraham to assure us that hope abides as an anchor of the soul—both "sure" and "steadfast" (Hebrews 6:13-19). Abraham hoped in God for years that he would receive a seed and become a great nation. The certainty of that hope was secured by the promise of God to which He added an oath. By these two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie—His word and His oath—Abraham waited patiently and the promise was fulfilled.

God Is Faithful. God, it is clear, must be true to both Himself and His word. Man's lack of faith does not affect the faithfulness of God to His promise. Though every man be found a liar, Paul argues in a text highlighting the sinfulness of man, "let God be found true" (Romans 3:3-4). In the entirety of the oracles of God from the promise of a redeemer to the promises to Abraham and to Israel—God has shown man that He "will in no wise fail" him and "will in no wise forsake" him (see Hebrews 13:5). Hope prevails because Jehovah, the God who promised, is trustworthy.

Man Believes. Yet despite the promises, faithfulness, and blessings from God, hope abides only in a man who by faith holds in his heart the "assurance of things hoped for" and the "conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Moses, when he decided to leave Pharaoh's house, was by faith convicted "of things not seen" and "looked unto the recompense of reward" (Hebrews 11:26). It was the faith he embraced in his heart that housed the expectation of a reward from God. It was no different with Abraham who "in hope believed against hope," looked "unto the promise of God," and "wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong in faith" (Romans 4:18-21).

These men of old are examples for God's believing servants today. Jesus opened the way into heaven through the veil of His flesh when He entered the "most holy" place in heaven to appear before the face of God on behalf of believers in Christ (see Hebrews 9:23-26; 10:19-20). We, because of God's promise and His faithfulness, have confidence in that unseen reward—in that abiding hope that anchors our souls, binds us to purity, moves us to fruitfulness, and upholds us in affliction (see Hebrews 6:18-19, 1 John 3:3; Colossians 1:5-7; Hebrews 11:24-27). There is victory in Jesus for men of faith and unmovable steadfastness (1 Corinthians 15:50-58).