

## Banner of Love – Part 4: “Branded By God”

Sunday Morning, October 29, 2017

As we continue our series, “Banner of Love”, let’s remember that we have looked at three phases of the Christian Life: 1) Salvation, 2) Witnessing, 3) Following Him. This morning we will be looking at an unusual phase, one that takes us into the depth of spiritual suffering. But first let’s go to the greatest example of suffering; Jesus on the cross. Let’s read the account of Christ’s death on the cross in **(Matthew 27: 37 – 44)**.

**37** And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him:

THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

**38** Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.

**39** And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads

**40** and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

**41** Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said,

**42** “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.

**43** He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

**44** Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

† Jesus is the Son of Man (100%).

† Jesus is the Son of God (100%).

† Jesus was innocent of any wrong doing or sin.

† Jesus was stripped, mocked, and beaten before He went to the cross.

† Jesus carried His own cross to Golgotha.

† Jesus was nailed to a roughhewn cross & hung in shame between 2 thieves.

† Jesus was ridiculed saying, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save.” (vs 42)

† Jesus was challenged to come down off the cross and if He did so they would believe He was the Messiah, God.

As Christians, we know this account of Jesus' death on Calvary and many know that God the Father in Heaven shamed His Son Jesus by not interceding for Him, but instead turned His back on Him. Have you ever felt God, your Heavenly Father, turned His back on you? How do you analyze that? Is there any hope beyond that sense of rejection from God? Let's remember that Christ's faithfulness to the cross was the very example for every Christian to bear! It was here at the cross, where Jesus knew the emotional pain from man and God, yet He was faithful to the Father's Will, even though as a man, He was clearly misunderstood and rejected. Jesus was stripped of everything; friends, family members, ministry to people, good health and His clothes, yet He kept His faith in God's will to suffer and die a horrible death as payment and punishment for our sins.

As we grow in Christ, He will sometimes strip us down to nothing. He knows if we're ready to receive what He has for us to receive from the experience. He knows that we will learn a better perspective in life and of Him. Let's look at an example of a common sinner, as a natural born man, going through such stripping of his life in **(Job 1: 6 - 12)**.

**6** Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.

**7** And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

**8** Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

**9** So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"

**10** Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

**11** But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

**12** And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

As the story of Job is told we find that “everything” was taken from him except his life and still he remained faithful and trusted God’s Will for him. Turn to **(Job 23: 2 - 14)**.

2 “Even today my complaint is bitter; My hand is listless because of my groaning.

3 Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat!

4 I would present my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments.

5 I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me.

6 Would He contend with me in His great power? No! But He would take note of me.

7 There the upright could reason with Him, and I would be delivered forever from my Judge.

8 “Look, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him;

9 When He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; When He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him.

10 But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.

11 My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside.

12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

13 “But He is unique, and who can make Him change? And whatever His soul desires, that He does.

14 For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such things are with Him.

Job, just as Jesus, knew that God was on His throne in Heaven even though it seemed God had turned His back on him. In **(Matthew 27:46)** we read how Jesus, while on the cross, also called out to God,

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Job had questions for God, when he would find Him, i.e. know His presence and ask those questions. In verse 14 we see that Job was confident that God was working a good work in him, he never allowed his emotions to deny his knowledge of God nor his relationship with Him.

Watchman Nee, a 1900's Christian author, leader and teacher in China who was imprisoned for his faith said:

*"The Cross took away our sin, but the cross we carry brings us into triumphant life."*

**And**

**"Good is not always God's Will, but God's Will is always good."**

Now there is a danger we face in our lives with Christ, it happens when we stop seeking God and become complacent in our walk with Him. The keen awareness of God becomes dull and robs us from the fulness of life God has for us. Remember, God is Holy. He never does anything wrong and He loves us beyond measure, and will never leave us even if we think He has! Therefore, we can trust Him!

As we talked about last week, there is a roaring lion roaming the earth seeking to devour us and as we read today in Job 1:7, that roaring lion is Satan roaming the earth. Peter teaches us some important things to remember in **(I Peter 5: 8 - 10)**.

**8** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

**9** Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

**10** But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

**We need to resist and be steadfast in our faith when we suffer. God will perfect us through the trials. He will strengthen us.**

Job came to know God through the suffering. Look at **(Job 42: 1 – 6)**.

**1** Then Job answered the Lord and said:

**2** "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.

**3** You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

4 Listen, please, & let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, & you shall answer Me.'

5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.

6 Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

The question is, "Are we willing to let God disturb our lives for the sake of knowing Him?" ☐ Yes ☐ No

We are not only called to "put off the old man" in Ephesians 4: 22-24, but we must be willing also for God to put the branding of shame, sufferings and misunderstanding on our lives, as Jesus did from childhood through the Cross. This too is another phase of holding up the "Banner of Love"!