



A Spectacle Before Spectators

Joseph Herrin (1-25-2001)

This article is written for those precious saints of God who have been in trials and fiery furnaces and wilderness places for some time now. I have noted a peculiar thing about some of these people, as I have noted it in my own experience. God has placed many in trials that have drawn a lot of criticism from others. At a time when it would seem that the children of God could use an encouraging word the most, they have received judgment, criticism, and scorn. People have wagged their heads and their tongues as they consider your life and trials.

A large part of what has precipitated this response is that God has required His children, who would hear His voice and respond to it, to do things that don't make sense in the natural world. God has called some to quit perfectly good jobs and to trust Him for their financial provision. God has placed in their hearts an understanding that they are in a time of transition and He has a new calling for them. But they must first go through a time of cleansing, molding and preparation that only responding to such an illogical request could bring upon them. (I say it is illogical from a worldly perspective, for from a spiritual vantage point there is great precedence and purpose in it.)

Such saints must contend not only with personal doubts and fears about taking such a step, but they are subjected to all the wisdom of the world and of a carnal church that knows next to nothing about hearing God's voice and

responding in obedience; responding regardless of what is in the cup God would have them to drink from. God has required some of His children to trust Him for physical healing in some matter, either in their own life or in the life of another. I am speaking here of those who have received a clear word from God on a matter, not those who have been indoctrinated with doctrines and principles of healing who are attempting to step out and apply things they have learned from men. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word (rhema - spoken word) of God. I am speaking here of those who know they have received a word from God to trust Him and wait upon Him in some matter of healing.

As many of these have waited upon God they have experienced setbacks and discouragements as they have waited and waited and have not yet seen God's promised deliverance and healing. The voice of the world tells them they are fools to expect God to heal them. The world says, "God has given us the medical profession in these modern days. This is the way in which God will heal. You are a fool to not lean upon the arm of man, trusting instead to the unseen arm of God." As you have tarried, waiting, you have endured much criticism and the judgments of those who feel you are deluded. Why? Why would God subject you to this?

For some of you God has given a promise of a restored relationship. It may be a spouse or a child or some other relation. Some have children who have become rebellious and have embraced the wickedness of the world, yet God has spoken to you that He has some great purpose for this one. Against all appearances you have been holding to that which God has revealed to you. Though the child continues to act shamefully and shows little fear of God in

their life, you hold onto the promise and continue to remind the child of this promise as well.

There are many other things that God is using for the personal crucible of refining and testing of His children in this hour. As a firstfruits company many are fulfilling the words recorded in Daniel.

Daniel 12:9-10

9 And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time.

10 "Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.

(NAS)

Many are being purged, purified, and refined in this hour and, as prophesied, none of the wicked understand. Those who are undergoing this purifying process appear as a spectacle to those who are not being purified, those who are unwilling to submit to the process, and those who have no knowledge of God.

As I have watched this I have had a thought gnawing at the back of my mind. "God, why would You ask me, or my brothers and sisters who love You so dearly, to go through a trial that the world and the apostate church does not understand? In what way are You glorified in this trial? Certainly it does not seem that You are glorified before men, for all men are condemning and criticizing and misunderstanding Your remnant in this hour."

I have been reminded by well meaning saints that our lives are to glorify God and to be a light and a testimony before men. They observe the trials that I have endured and they ask, "In what way is God being glorified? In what way is your life a light before man? If people are criticizing and scorning your walk then are you not rather turning men away from God?" These are questions that bear answering.

As I have spent time before the Father with these questions one of the things I received from God was an assurance that the applause of the world does not equate with glory being given to God. God is not glorified when all men speak well of us. The words of Yahshua came clearly to me.

Luke 6:26

"Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets."

(NAS)

One might well ask, "If they spoke well of the false prophets, how did they speak of the true prophets?" It doesn't take much investigation to find out. They were mocked, scorned, ridiculed, judged as being of the devil, put out of the congregation, and even mistreated and many were killed.

Luke 11:47-51

47 "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them.

48 "Consequently, you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build

their tombs.

49 "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute,

50 in order that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,

51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'

(NAS)

Yahshua clearly states here that He will send prophets and apostles to the world, and to those who represent the religious system of the day, and some will be killed and some will be persecuted. The question I have been asked could be asked of them, "How is God glorified if all men are scorning you and judging you to be evil? How are you being a light to the world?"

Before I answer this question I would like to mention that the Son of God, Yahshua the Messiah, was also judged as a transgressor and hung between two thieves. To the religious leaders of the day His offenses were more serious than that of the thieves He was crucified between. They accused Him of one of the greatest of offenses, being a blasphemer against God. They used the word of God to condemn Him and to sentence Him to death. Is not the word being used against many of those today who are seeking to walk faithfully with God, even at great personal cost and loss?

But the question remains, "How is God glorified in all of this if men are reviling,

not praising, those who are following Him?” You may have asked the same question. Consider Job. He suffered tremendous things and to his closest friends, who claimed a considerable knowledge of God and his ways, it appeared that Job must certainly be a great sinner to experience all that came against him. They tried to convince Job of his transgression. How was God glorified if those men who observed him did not applaud him, but rather condemned him?

The answer begins to become obvious when we think of Job for we know that there were others observing Job besides mankind. We know that Job was being observed by all of heaven. Both the holy angels and the enemies of God in the heavens were considering Job’s life, his behavior, his words, and his faith.

As I look at the scriptures I see that Job was not an exception. Job was not the only person who had a heavenly audience observing his life. Indeed, all of God’s children are under observation at all times by both the holy angels and the fallen. There is beyond the angels a great cloud of witnesses that are intent upon the lives of God’s saints. I would like to look at some of the scriptures that reveal this observation.

I have long been intrigued by the life of David, this man with a heart after God. One particular comment in the story of his life caused me to pause and consider what was being revealed. It was a comment that was made during the period of David’s greatest failure when he committed adultery and murder. Nathan the prophet was sent to confront David with his sin and the following is revealed.

II Samuel 12:13-14

13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against Yahweh." And Nathan said to David, "[Yahweh] also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.

14 "However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of [Yahweh] to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die."

(NAS)

Did you catch the comment? Nathan said, "by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of Yahweh to blaspheme." What enemies? Who knew about David's sin? It is certain that David did not broadcast what he did. Only he, Bathsheba, and Joab knew what he had done. It is fairly certain that neither Bathsheba nor Joab would blab about what had transpired. To David it seemed that his sin was hidden. No one knew about it.

The enemies of God here could not refer to Israel's natural enemies, the nations that dwelt around them, for they had no way to know of David's sin. Who did know? Satan knew. Those who followed Satan in rebellion knew. The holy angels also knew.

I believe I have rightly concluded that the enemies of Yahweh spoken of by Nathan were those in the spiritual realm. Satan and the angels that rebelled against God were those referred to. In the book of Job we are given this picture.

Job 1:6-10

6 Now there was a day when the servants of God came to present themselves before [Yahweh], and Satan also came among them.

7 And [Yahweh] said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered [Yahweh] and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

8 And [Yahweh] said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."

9 Then Satan answered [Yahweh], "Does Job fear God for nothing?"

10 "Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land."

A number of things are revealed in this passage. Those in the heavens are attentive to the lives of men. Both the friends and the enemies of God are observing the lives of men. When God asked Satan about Job it was clear that Satan knew Job very well and was aware of the details of his life. It is also interesting to note that men are the subject of discussion between God and the angels, including the fallen angels that are counted as God's enemies.

Certainly David, like Job, was closely observed by all of heaven. Satan and his followers knew what was going on in David's life. The sin that David thought was hidden was not hidden from their eyes. This gave them occasion to come before God and to blaspheme. I can imagine some of their accusations.

“You call Yourself a righteous and holy God. How is it then that the man You have anointed as king, the man You have blessed and prospered, how is it that he has both committed adultery with the wife of one of his most faithful servants and then he has murdered this same servant to hide his sin? How is it that he goes unpunished if You are so righteous and holy? Is this an example of a man whom You testify has a heart after You? Will you now reward him in his wickedness? Will You withhold judgment from him? Is this man truly among the most faithful of Your servants? Do his actions represent Your will?”

In this manner the enemies of God were given an occasion to blaspheme due to the sin of David. What I want to point out in this example, is that the lives of the saints of God are always being observed by those in the heavens. Consider the words of Paul.

I Corinthians 4:9

For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

(NAS)

Paul speaks of the apostles as being a spectacle and he even lists the angels before he mentions men. A spectacle is something observed, something watched, inspected, and scrutinized. In the same way our lives are on display in the heavenlies. This truth is revealed in the following scripture.

I Corinthians 11:10

Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her

head, because of the angels.

(NAS)

In this scripture where Paul is teaching on authority and the symbolic use of a headcovering, he states that the reason for a woman wearing a headcovering is for the angels. What? You mean that wearing a headcovering is not for the observation of mankind? This is a marvelous thing. In this scripture there is no denying that we are on display to the heavens. We are even told to do particular things as a testimony and a sign to those heavenly beings that are observing our lives.

Satan's original sin was rebellion. He uncovered his head before God. He wanted to be equal with God and not subject to God. For his rebellion he was judged and cast out of heaven. The woman by wearing a covering on her head does so as a sign to the angels. To the angels she is testifying, "I am content with the position God has given me in creation. I seek to neither rise above my position, nor to fall below it. I willingly accept and embrace the authorities placed above me and I will remain submitted in the place God has called me to."

To the fallen angels this is a rebuke and to the holy angels this is the greatest of testimonies. What an awesome revelation. Our lives are always being observed. Our actions, words, and faith are on display in the heavens. This is further revealed in the following verse.

Hebrews 13:2

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some

have entertained angels without knowing it.

(NAS)

Returning to my original purpose in this article it should be apparent that there is a realm that we rarely consider that is very real indeed. There are observers to our lives beyond those we see with our physical eyes. How does God receive glory from our lives when men speak ill of us and do not understand our walk? The answer should be more evident now. If our disobedience can give an occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme, then our obedience is occasion for great glory being given to God. When heaven observes mankind, weak as we are, pressing on in obedience to God through trials, tribulations, distresses, uncertainties, fears, and every sort of hindrance, God is greatly glorified. The mouths of God's enemies are stopped and there is great joy among those who are the friends of God. Peter gives us the following revelation.

I Peter 2:19-20

19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly...

20 But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

(NAS)

Our lives are being observed by God and by the hosts of heaven. God is honored and we gain favor before Him when we press on faithfully despite persecutions, distresses, fears, and the false judgments of others.

If you have wondered how what you are enduring can bring glory to God, then wonder no longer. The applause or rejection we receive from man does not indicate whether God is glorified. There is an unseen realm where things are being weighed and judged and where we are constantly observed. Our every victory and every failing is seen. Every tear and every moment of rejoicing is remembered. No, what you are walking in may not be understood by those around you, but there are unseen observers and they do understand. The holy hosts of God are rooting for the saints of God. Keep on! Don't give up now! Your vindication is coming!