

As You Grow Closer to God, Doesn't Your Life Get Easier?

Many Christians believe that once they learn to be “close to God” – their life will become easier. They believe that when God has come into our life, and is making our decisions for us, that we won't have any – or nearly as much – trouble.

Unfortunately, the opposite is most often true.

The prophet, Jeremiah, King David, and suffering Job, ALL asked the question: Why do the wicked prosper, and the righteous suffer?

You are always righteous, LORD, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease? Jeremiah 12:1

For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Psalm 73:3

Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? Job 21:7

There are several reasons:

- 1) When Satan already “owns” a person, because the person does not know Christ, there is no reason for Satan to cause him problems. In fact, Satan may even reward him with riches and a life of ease. Look at Satan-worshipping/Illuminati Queen Elizabeth who just turned 90. Henry Kissinger is 92. David Rockefeller is 100.

But, if that person begins to turn to Jesus Christ, Satan doesn't want to lose him, and the trouble begins!

- 2) When life becomes easier, we have a tendency to wander from God. “Trouble” keeps us close to the Lord.
- 3) When Christ has opened our mind to truths that few others understand, He wants to make sure we don't become arrogant or proud. He wants to constantly remind us that everything we know – comes from Him. (See the experience of Paul – below.)

Biblical examples:

Abraham

Abraham was chosen by God to start the revival of the worship of the true God in his (Abraham's) time. He was called by God to leave pagan Babylon and journey to an unknown country.

“He (Abraham) went out, not knowing where he was going.” Heb 11:8

Abraham followed God's leading to a foreign country. He left his entire family behind except his nephew, Lot, and followed God's direction, and eventually became the “father” of the Christians – NOT the Jews. The Israelites were Christians because they were looking forward to the First Coming of Christ, the Messiah.

Did Abraham's life get easier because he had been chosen by God to leave paganism and become the leader of the “great revival” of the worship of the true God?

Abraham had no children, and he and his wife were getting older. Finally God promised Abraham a son, but he got tired of waiting and had a son, Ishmael, by his wife's maid, Hagar – a situation that God clearly did not approve of.

Finally, Abraham, now 100 years old, had a son, Isaac, miraculously by his then 90-year old wife, but Ishmael mocked Isaac, and Hagar mocked Sarah, Abraham's wife. God told Abraham that he had to send away his first-born son, Ishmael, and Hagar. Abraham never saw Ishmael again.

A famine occurred in Palestine and Abraham, on his own decision, journeyed, with his wife, Sarah, into Egypt to find food. Apparently, Sarah was a beautiful woman, and the Pharaoh took her to be his wife, since Abraham lied and said she was his sister. But Pharaoh's house was cursed by God until he gave Sarah back to Abraham.

God asked Abraham to offer Isaac as an “ascent offering” on Mt. Moriah. Because all animal “ascent” offerings were slaughtered and burned, Abraham thought God wanted him to do that to Isaac, so he proceeded to do so until God abruptly stopped Abraham.

Does this sound like Abraham's life was easier after he learned to know God?

Moses

Moses was called by God to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Moses decided to do this his own way. When he saw an Egyptian mistreating an Israelite, Moses killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. When it became known, Moses had to flee for his life to Midian where he married Zipporah, the daughter of the Priest of Midian, Jethro. For 40 years, Moses tended Jethro's flocks until God called him again to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery to the Promised Land of Canaan.

During the 40 years of the Exodus, there were several mutinies by the Israelites against Moses, even his own brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam tried to undermine his authority (Miriam was smitten with leprosy and Aaron built the golden calf), and the Israelites were constantly complaining to Moses throughout the 40 year journey.

Finally, the second time the Israelites were complaining severely about a lack of water, God told Moses to "Speak to the Rock" and water would flow to quench their thirst. (The First time water came from the Rock, God had told Moses to strike the rock Once – representing the "striking of the Rock – Jesus Christ – Once – at His crucifixion.)

Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. (Exodus 17:6)

Instead of "speaking" to the rock, the second time, Moses Struck the rock, and took credit (with God) for fetching water from the rock for the Israelites.

8 "Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle."

9 And Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he commanded him.

10 Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?"

11 And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock.

12 And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you

shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.”
(Numbers 20:8-12 ESV, emphasis added)

Because of this sin, Moses was not allowed, even after the difficult 40 years in the wilderness, to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.

Was Moses' life easier when he got to know the Lord well?

Elijah

God called Elijah to become a prophet, to tell the Israelites to turn away from their apostasy and turn back to the Lord. Elijah was to tell King Ahab that because of his (and the Israelites' sin of paganism) there would be no rain for seven years. King Ahab had many of his men hunting for Elijah to kill him.

Elijah hid out in the wilderness, at the Brook Cherith for a year, alone, then God told him to go Zarephath, in Sidon, outside of Israel, until the episode at Mt. Carmel where, seven years after the drought had commenced, Elijah gathered the Israelites for a face-off against the Priests of Baal.

When the Priests of Baal had no success in conjuring up their pagan gods to affirm their sacrifice, Elijah told the Israelites to slay these 400 Priests of Baal – all of whom were beholden to Jezebel.

When Jezebel found out that Elijah had ordered her 400 Priests of Baal slaughtered, she vowed to have Elijah killed. Elijah ran from Jezebel, hid in a cave, and became so depressed he asked God to let him die.

Did Elijah's life become easier when he became close to God?

Daniel - - and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Daniel and his 3 friends were taken captive from Israel to Babylon, when they were about 15 years old, and as far as we know, they never saw their families again.. At one time, they were almost killed when the other “wise men” were unable to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Eventually, Daniel became a high ruler of Babylon, but because of jealousy among the King's other statesmen, Daniel was thrown into the Lions' Den – at about age 81.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were still in their youth when they refused to obey the King's command to bow down to the King's pagan image.

Were the lives of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego easier when they got closer to the Lord?

Jeremiah

God called Jeremiah to warn the Israelites to leave paganism, and the worship of false gods, and to return to the Living God.

Jeremiah's ministry prompted naysayers to plot against him. Even the people of Anathoth sought to kill him. (Jer. 11:21-23) Unhappy with Jeremiah's message, possibly for concern that it would shut down the Anathoth sanctuary, his priestly kin and the men of Anathoth conspired to take his life. However, the Lord revealed the conspiracy to Jeremiah, protected his life, and declared disaster for the men of Anathoth.

When Jeremiah complained to the Lord about this persecution, the Lord explained that the attacks on him would become worse.

Physical persecution started when the priest Pashur ben Immer, a temple official, sought out Jeremiah to have him beaten and put him in the stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin for a day. After this, Jeremiah expresses lament over the difficulty that speaking God's word has caused him and regrets becoming a laughingstock and the target of mockery. He recounts how if he tries to shut the word of the Lord inside and not mention God's name, the word becomes like fire in his heart and he is unable to hold it in.

Conflicts with false prophets

At the same time while Jeremiah was prophesying coming destruction because of the sins of the nation, a number of other prophets were prophesying peace. The Lord had Jeremiah speak against these false prophets.

For example, during the reign of King Zedekiah, The Lord instructed Jeremiah to make a yoke of the message that the nation would be subject to the king of Babylon and that listening to the false prophets would bring a much worse disaster. The prophet Hananiah opposed Jeremiah's message. He took the yoke off of Jeremiah's neck, broke it, and prophesied to the priests and all the people that within two years the Lord would break the yoke of the king of Babylon, but the Lord spoke to Jeremiah saying "Go and speak to Hananiah saying, you have broken the yoke of wood, but you have made instead a yoke of iron." (see: Jeremiah 28:13)

The Biblical narrative portrays Jeremiah as being subject to additional

persecutions. After Jeremiah prophesied that Jerusalem would be handed over to the Babylonian army, the king's officials, including Pashur the priest, tried to convince King Zedekiah that Jeremiah should be put to death because he was discouraging the soldiers as well as the people. Zedekiah answered that he would not oppose them.

Consequently, the king's officials took Jeremiah and put him down into a [cistern](#), where he sank down into the mud. The intent seemed to be to kill Jeremiah by allowing him to starve to death in a manner designed to allow the officials to claim to be innocent of his blood. A Cushite rescued Jeremiah by pulling him out of the cistern, but Jeremiah remained imprisoned until Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian army in 587 BC.

Was Jeremiah's life easier when he became closer to the Lord?

Isaiah

Isaiah was also persecuted, and tradition says that he died by being sawed in half by his enemies.

Paul's Persecutions

Acts 9:29

And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death.

Acts 13:50

But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

Acts 14:5

And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them,

Acts 14:19

But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

Acts 16:22

The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.

Acts 18:12

But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat,

Acts 21:36

for the multitude of the people kept following them, shouting, "Away with him!"

Acts 22:22

They listened to him up to this statement, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!"

Acts 23:10

And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.

1 Corinthians 4:12

and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;

2 Corinthians 4:9

persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

2 Corinthians 11:24

Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.

2 Timothy 2:9

for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned.

2 Timothy 3:11

persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!

Paul's persecutions were numerous and severe

Paul's persecutions were so numerous and so severe, Paul asked God for some relief from them. He called all these persecutions, his "Thorn in the flesh – which was Satan buffeting (tormenting) him (hitting him with blow after blow), and asked God to relieve him from these Satanic attacks.

"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of

Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.
2 Cor 12:7-9

Paul's "Thorn in the Flesh" was NOT poor eyesight, as so many Christians believe. Paul TELLS us what his thorn in the flesh was: Satan's buffeting him – or tormenting him: all these episodes of persecution.

Was Paul's life easier when he became closer to the Lord?

Many of the disciples were martyred:

James was beheaded,
(according to tradition) Peter was crucified upside down,
and Paul was beheaded.

The Faith of Many: Hebrews 11:36-38

...36and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.

37They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated

38(men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground....

When you are a "regular" Christian, or if you are a non-Christian, Satan already has you in his grip. But when you start looking for the Lord, and TRUE Christianity, Satan comes at you with a vengeance. Satan is a very poor Loser!

And the better you get to know Jesus Christ, the more Satan comes after you.