



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

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Subject: Suffering

WHO SAYS LIFE IS FAIR?

And the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations. And Job died, an old man, and full of days. Job 42:12a,16-17

Whoever said that life is fair? Certainly not God. Airplanes crash and burn just as do marriages and future hopes and dreams. Innocent children in Africa die from HIV as well as the doctor who has spent her life striving to save the lives of her patients. Never, under any stretch of the imagination, would a sane person ask God for difficulty, for trials, for illness that he or she might learn the lessons of grace and patience which come from facing difficulty and winning the battle.

Yet only a fool would deny the fact that some of life's greatest lessons are learned from facing the unfair challenges of life, but instead of growing bitter, he or she finds the strength of God to triumph.

Take, for example, the magnificent story of a man named Job. In the book that bears his name in the Old Testament, we learn that Job was a good man. Nonetheless, he wasn't spared trouble in life, and when his world began to fall apart, his wife challenged: "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" (Job 2:9-10).

When Job's life began to unravel, his friends--arm chair philosophers--came to comfort him. The dialogue between them and Job is well worth reading. Perhaps like your friends who are quite certain they know why things are not going well for you, the three tried to comfort him. But they didn't really know what was in Job's heart.

They condemned Job--blamed him for his troubles, quite certain that he had really failed somewhere. It was the old belief that when things go well, it's a sign that you are a saint blessed by the Almighty, but when things go wrong, it's a sign you are a sinner. And trouble is your just dessert.

Job also struggled with this issue of life's unfairness. Yet he felt that he was innocent of wrongdoing. He asked, "...But how can a mortal be righteous before God? How then can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him?" (Job 9:2,14). Then in frustration Job cried out: "He is not a man like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both, someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more. Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot" (Job 9:32-35).

Have you ever felt like Job? Chafing at life's unfairness, misunderstood by your friends, wondering whether trouble is God's judgment for your own blunders that stings or just plain bad luck, you are confused, perplexed, fearful.

Hey, friend, the ball game isn't over. The end is not yet. More than a few individuals have felt like cursing God, or ending their own lives, wondering how things could ever turn around. If you are one of them, go to the end of the book of Job and read the final outcome. Job did go through a rough period of testing--one which God allowed to strengthen him and help him learn some lessons which could never have been grasped apart from walking through deep waters. Eventually Job said, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you" (Job 42:5). Head knowledge became heart knowledge, and Job became a better person because of life's unfairness. Life may be unfair, but God is just and fair. Of that you can be certain.

Resource reading: Job 42.