

FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL

THE WAY FORWARD IN CHRIST

(Part 26)

THE IMPORTANCE OF JOB

Our theme for 2010 comes from a very challenging book, Job. Our theme brings us to grapple with the mystery of God as Almighty, with our nothingness apart from Him, and with redemptive suffering. This is so very different from and in direct contrast with where much of the world is going -- living lives apart from God, looking to self for “redemption” and well-being, disdaining weakness, discomfort and pain.

The book of Job brings us to the basics of the authentic gospel. And only in the authentic gospel can the world truly find peace.

Jesus asked, “But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Lk 18:8b). Today there is a lot of faith, and I believe when Jesus returns there will still be a lot of faith. But what kind of faith would it be?

- Will it be faith found in sects and cults?
- Will it be the faith of the liberal Christian churches?
- Will it be faith that comes from accepting and exulting in the gospel of prosperity?
- Will it be nominal faith, going through the motions but not really living in Christ?
- Will it be the faith that does proclaim Christ but at the same time have many other material idols in life?

If we talk of authentic faith, I believe that those who genuinely seek the kingdom of God will only be a “little flock”[1] (Lk 12:32).

It is in this that learning and living out the lessons of Job will be crucial.

- We need to be in awe of God the Almighty. If we lose this reverential fear, then we begin to live our own lives apart from Him.
- We need to see our own nothingness apart from Him. If not, we become proud with our accomplishments and begin to rely on our own wisdom and strength.
- We need to see the reality of spiritual warfare. Satan is at work, opposing and trying to destroy what is of God.

All these point to the means by which God redeems us, enabling us to be part of this little flock of authentic faith. Such means are affliction and the suffering this brings.

- Affliction, especially when severe such as what happened to Job, humbles us. It puts us in the right place in relation to God.[2] Only when we are humbled can God raise us up.

- The way of salvation is the way of the cross. This is the path God chose. It is a mysterious path. But it is the only way for us to have redemption. This is why Jesus defines discipleship as denying ourselves and taking up our cross. Only then can we truly follow him.
- Suffering is redemptive. Again, the cross was God's chosen instrument of salvation. Suffering purifies and brings us into a more intimate relationship with God.
- Suffering deepens our faith in God the Almighty.

This is why in the mystery of God and in the mystery of our relationship with Him, we are called to simply trust in Him, because He is just and righteous.

This year God wants to build us as His people, according to His ways and not ours. This year and henceforth, God wants to use us as His effective instruments. God can only do these if we are properly formed in holiness. We look to Jesus of course. We look to Paul and the many saints. But this year, we also look to Job.

Actually, if we were not so focused on our own ways and our own interpretation of the authentic gospel, we would already have seen the many lessons of Job in the life and teachings of Jesus and Paul. The similarities between Jesus and Job are striking.[3]

As we start this new year 2010, as we enter more deeply into our theme for this year, let us learn the lessons of Job.[4] These will be enduring lessons, not just for this year, but until Jesus returns again.

When that time comes, may we, and the many we are able to evangelize, be found among the little flock.

(January 1, 2010)

[1] "Little" is a comparative term. The flock can still be millions, but compared to the billions of people in the world, a few millions would be little.

[2] Affliction comes in many ways. Many times it comes by means of the forces of nature -- floods, earthquakes, tsunamis. Aside from humbling us, such natural calamities point us to the God who is all-powerful Creator, the Almighty. We realize our total dependence on God.

[3] I will deal with this in a future paper.

[4] You should read and re-read the Lessons of Job (including the series on "Our theme for 2010"), that I put out. You should reflect deeply on them. You should grapple with the hard teachings. You should not ignore or just brush aside what you find uncomfortable.