

The Devil Does Not Waste His Time On Everyone

The devil does not chase after everybody. He does not need to.

Open your Bible and look at who actually got attacked. Paul was beaten five times with thirty-nine stripes, beaten with rods three times, stoned once, shipwrecked three times, and left in danger on every side (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). Stephen was dragged out of the city and stoned to death (Acts 7:57-60). Daniel was thrown to the lions for refusing to stop praying (Daniel 6:16). Three young men were thrown into a furnace heated seven times hotter than normal because they would not bow (Daniel 3:19-20). Jeremiah was lowered into a muddy pit and left to die because his preaching would not stop (Jeremiah 38:6). Job lost his children, his wealth, and his health in a single stretch of chapters, and the text tells us plainly why the attack came (Job 1:8-12). James was executed with a sword while the church watched (Acts 12:1-2). John was exiled to a rock in the middle of the sea for the word of God (Revelation 1:9).

Every one of those names has something else in common besides suffering. Look again. Every one of them was diligent. Every one of them was doing something that mattered to the kingdom of God at the moment the trouble came.

Paul was not suffering because he sat quietly in a pew. He was suffering because he planted churches across the Roman world and would not stop. Daniel was not thrown to the lions for keeping his devotional life private. He was thrown in because he prayed with the windows open where everyone could see it (Daniel 6:10). Stephen was not stoned for staying silent in front of the council. He was stoned because he preached Christ to the very men who had crucified Him (Acts 7:51-53).

Paul wrote it as a settled rule, not an exception for a few unlucky believers. "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Not some. Not the especially bold. All who desire to live godly.

That verse should stop a person in his tracks. Not because it promises pain for its own sake, but because it draws a straight line between godliness and resistance. If godliness draws fire, then the presence or absence of fire tells you something about the godliness.

I am not going to draw that line all the way out for you in this post. I want you to draw it yourself, with your Bible open, not with my conclusion in your hand.

Questions I Am Leaving With You

There is a correlation between Bible characters who suffered and their diligence for God. Stop right here. Think about that observation before you move past it.

If a person does not suffer in their Christianity, what does that mean?

Could it mean complacency?

Could it mean they are not diligent, so they are not a threat to the devil?

Or could there be another explanation the text itself would offer, one that does not fit neatly into either of those two?

Do not take my word for any of it. Take the questions into the text yourself.

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19 and ask what Peter expected a suffering church to feel, and why he told them not to think it strange. Read Revelation 3:14-22 and ask what the Lord said to a church that was neither cold nor hot, a church comfortable enough to say it needed nothing. Ask what word He used for that condition, and what He threatened to do because of it. Read James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8 and ask what kind of person actually draws the devil's attention, and what kind he simply leaves alone. Read Luke 22:31 and ask why Satan asked for Peter specifically, and what Peter was doing in that season that made him worth asking for.

Then read Hebrews 5:8, where even the Son of God learned obedience by the things He suffered, and ask what that verse would mean if suffering had nothing to do with diligence at all.

I am not asking you to conclude that every hardship in your life is a badge of spiritual honor. Scripture does not say that. Sickness happens to the diligent and the complacent alike. Grief does not check a person's Bible-reading record before it arrives. That is not the correlation in view here.

The question in view is narrower and harder to escape. When your Christianity costs you nothing, when it draws no resistance, when the devil leaves you alone entirely, what does your own life say about the answer? You already know how to search a concordance. You already know how to read a chapter twice. Go find out what the diligent looked like before you decide what category you are standing in.

The fire did not fall on Paul, Daniel, Stephen, and the three Hebrew men because they were unlucky. Ask yourself, honestly, why it fell where it fell, and why it has or has not fallen on you.

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