

## Advantage in Adversity

**Introduction:** Adversity seems to have encircled our world in ways that we did not expect: a microscopic enemy has been unleashed upon our planet and every nation in the world is suffering. Everyone from the poorest to the richest, average people, as well as presidents and royalty, have been affected by it. Job was someone acquainted with adversity and trouble. He said,

**Job 5:7** - *But man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*

Adversity comes to all of us. In fact, the Bible says that in the last days perilous times, times of adversity, will come.

**2 Timothy 3:1 NLT** - *You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times.*

As Christians, we live in the same planet, breathe the same air and adversity does touch our lives as well.

However, we can become fatalistic like Job and see no way out or we can choose to look at what God has provided for us. We could choose today to focus on adversity to the point we magnify it above hope, or we could remind ourselves of the advantage we have in Him!

### I - Advantage

One **dictionary** defines advantage as “*anything that places one in an improved or favourable position, especially in coping with competition or difficulties*”

Interestingly, there were two men mentioned in the Bible whose names in Hebrew mean ‘**advantage**’ (Ithran – Genesis 36:26 and 1 Chronicles 7:37).

**Job was someone who faced incredible adversity but felt disadvantaged. At one point he thought that the fact that he was a righteous man and someone who followed God, perhaps added no benefit to his life on earth.**

**Job 35:2-3** - *“Do you think this is right? do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God’s?’<sup>3</sup> For you say, ‘**what advantage** will it be to You? **What profit** shall I have, more than if I had sinned?’*

**3b NLT:** *What’s the use of living a righteous life?’*

He questioned whether there was any benefit at all, any advantage at all in serving God and doing what is right.

Let us look now at what **verse 16** says:

**Job 35:16** Amplified Bible (AMPC) - *16 Job uselessly opens his mouth and multiplies words without knowledge [drawing the worthless conclusion that the righteous have no more **advantage** than the wicked].*

... that would be a worthless conclusion! When we are faced with adversity, we still have an advantage!

## II - The Supreme Advantage

**Philippians 3:8** Amplified Bible (AMPC) - *8 Yes, furthermore, I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and **supreme advantage**) of knowing **Christ Jesus** my Lord and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him [of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly]. For His sake I have lost everything and consider it all to be mere rubbish (refuse, dregs), in order that I may win (gain) Christ (the Anointed One),*

- a) Like Job, Paul also experienced loss. However, Paul acknowledged that his life had a “supreme advantage”! The knowledge of Christ was the supreme advantage of his life.

We need to go **deeper** into the knowledge of Jesus, our supreme advantage!

*...becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him [of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly]...*

To Know Jesus deeply and intimately will give you a supreme advantage in life. You will live life on a different level – peaceful, abundant and overflowing.

- b) There were two sisters in the NT, one who was anxious and busy and another who decided to seat at the feet of Jesus, hear His word and get acquainted with Him. Jesus said that the later had the advantage!

**Luke 10:38-42** Amplified Bible (AMPC) - *38 Now while they were on their way, it occurred that Jesus entered a certain village, and a woman named Martha received and welcomed Him into her house. 39 And she had a sister named Mary, who seated herself at the Lord's feet and was listening to His teaching. 40 But Martha [overly occupied and too busy] was distracted with much serving; and she came up to Him and said, Lord, is it nothing to You that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me [to lend a hand and do her part along with me]! 41 But the Lord replied to her by saying, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; 42 There is need of only one or but a few things. Mary has chosen the good portion [**that which is to her advantage**], which shall not be taken away from her.*

**All your activity will never give you an advantage like being with Jesus!**

**Matthew 6:25,28,31,34** – 4 times: *Do not worry!*

In that context, Jesus said in **Verse 33** that if you put Him first, He will put you first – He will give you the advantage!

We are not victims, and we are not disadvantaged. God will help us fight our battles and will give us an improved position.

- c) The assertion by Job that perhaps there is no real advantage in serving God when it comes to adversity is contradicted by so many accounts in the scriptures:

There was a king in the OT whose name was Uzziah. He was one of the greatest kings of Judah. Compared with other kings of his nation, his advantage was clearly because he served God.

**2 Chronicles 26:7** says that “*the Lord helped Him*” and verse 8 says that he became “*exceedingly strong*”. **V. 15** says that God gave him inventions and ideas that put him way ahead of his enemies (“*he was marvellously helped*”).

Verse **5** says that “*while he sought the Lord, God made him prosper*”- That is advantage!

### III - The Advantage within us

**John 16:7** - *7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your **advantage** that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you*

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit into the heart of the believer. We are in a better place because of the Holy Spirit. We have an advantage because He is in us!

**Luke 11:13** **Amplified Bible (AMPC)** - *13 If you then, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts [**gifts that are to their advantage**] to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask and continue to ask Him!*

The Holy Spirit is God’s gift to our advantage. He is our Helper, He is our Guide, He is our Comforter – our coach and encourager!

Here’s an example of how the Holy Spirit can give us the advantage in a situation:

**Acts 11:27-29** - *27 And in these days, prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.*

The believers had an advantage: they had advanced warning and they were able to plan in advance. It didn’t take them by surprise like the rest of the people.

You have the Advantage inside you - that is why I shared a message a couple of weeks ago, entitled 'you have it in you'!

### **Conclusion**

Our opening text in Job 35 shows us that Job got it wrong when he assumed that there was no real *advantage* to the believer when it came to suffering.

(We should resist the temptation to imagine the nature and character of God in the light of the nature of our circumstances. Experience should never determine our theology).

We have the advantage, a 'supreme advantage', and we have it IN US by the Holy Spirit.