

We live in a comfort-oriented age. It is an age where we are supposed to eat, drink, take a pill, or buy something for ourselves whenever we feel a little below par. These are the things that many people depend on to be happy. But how well would we fare if we were forced to live without them? What kind of character would be revealed? What are we really like? I mean deep down inside of us?

Every once in a while we need to examine ourselves, to search our real self out. When my 'acquaintances' and I go on one of our trips, sometimes we take an endurance hike through the mountains, 30 miles in one day. This kind of trip can really show you things about yourself and what you are made of.

After several miles, the body runs out of the quick energy sores that usually keep us going. Once this happens, we are stripped down to the real core of our body's strength, the inner man. The body now must break down more complex substances to furnish its energy, substances that have been created and stored over a period of time. This is our true strength. We hit the 'wall' that marathon runners talk about, where our body undergoes a great change in metabolism. It is now much harder to run, but possible if we have the reserves.

Our spiritual lives are very similar. We never know what strength we have until a test comes. This is essentially what happened to Job. Satan came along and said, "How can we tell what Job is really like? Look at all of the things that are supporting him; Look at all the things that keep him feeling good! You can't tell anything about his real character!" Then God allowed Satan strip Job to the bare essentials; even his friends and his wife were no comfort to him. Job had only a disease-filled life left to him. But Job had a deep and abiding strength which had been established by his incomparable faith in God. Job knew how to build inner strength.

Many people avoid thinking directly about God and eternity. It is just too disturbing and uncomfortable. We coast through life on a 'surface strength' by putting in our time at church and keeping outward appearances and rules; but we never probe deeply within our soul to allow God to plant his strength there. We are too busy to study, we are too distracted to concentrate on God. And we don't understand why we need to do so. But when disaster strikes and trouble penetrates to the core of our being, then the false strengths of all the things that kept us comfortable before are shown to be worthless. Suddenly now we cannot get our minds off of what was once so unimportant. Now we are crushed, lacking the true strength to deal with the situation that comes only from our relationship with God.

The point is, if we want strength for the hard times, then we must prepare during the good times. We must be continually striving to be close to God, building our strength, or we will have nothing to support us when life gets tough. We must not let the desire for immediate comfort be the ruling influence in our lives. There is only one true comfort, one true comforter, and he comes only through God. Let us all find some time to think deeply about the glory of God each day.