

The Spiritual Boot Camp (I)

Reflection: 1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 Peter 4:12-13, Romans 5:3-5.

True Soldiers for Christ go through intense trials. They understand what the heat is all about, and take it in. They stand firm in their faith as God purifies them in preparation for greater things. Some believers who had God's calling on their lives have failed to endure the rigour of the trials apportioned to them, and allowed themselves to be counselled to *curse God* and give up. Unknown to them, as the Lord appointed them for greater things and started putting them through these trials, the devil also got busy and strategically placed human agents in their path to do what he knows best (John 10:10, Job 2:8-9).

God uses trials to prepare and equip His chosen vessels for the task ahead. Consider going through them, *Spiritual Training* (1 Peter 1:6-7). Some people have also rightly termed the seasons we go through these trials, as time spent in a *Spiritual Boot Camp*. We will be tested to be refined, beloved! Keep in mind that God allows these types of trials in our lives, irrespective of where they came from. Some of the trials will no doubt be from Satan; nevertheless, nothing happens to us (pleasant or unpleasant) without God knowing about it - and even permitting it. You only need to read the story of Job in the Bible, from the beginning to the end to understand that. God chooses to allow them in our lives, for His glory.

You will need to stay enrolled in this *Spiritual Boot Camp* to be acknowledged as having the qualities of a True Soldier of Christ. Take all your *courses*, pass your *tests*, and strive to *graduate* with flying colours. Don't be tempted to quit. When Job was going through his share of trials, *Mrs Job* said to him, "Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God and die" (Job 2:9).

Here is a list of naysayers like *Mrs Job*, who may try to make you drop out of the *Spiritual Boot Camp*. Be on the lookout for them:

- Scorners
- Mockers
- Negative people (could be friends or family)
- Unbelievers and carnal Christians
- Talebearers
- Detractors
- Brethren in Christ, who find a reason to dampen your spirit at the slightest opportunity
- Spiritual leaders who allow themselves to play a role in killing your destiny
- Competitive co-labourers in the vineyard, who see the work of God as another opportunity to build their own little kingdoms, and perceive you as a threat

A Few Points

(1) Understand that God does not derive joy from your trials. If the Lord has not made you go through them, that could denote a form of rejection. This is not always the case, but it could mean He still has not found you fit to be an instrument in His hands, and has no plans yet to set you apart for His glory.

(2) Every trial you encounter for sanctification purposes is a training exercise, behind which God has a divine purpose. He did not save you to allow you cruise into paradise on a luxury liner. He wants you to be of use in His Kingdom. When you stopped feeding on milk and became a mature believer, He enrolled you in the *Spiritual Boot Camp* to be drilled for a higher calling. Out of every trial comes a lesson. Count it joy (James 1:2-4, James 1:12).

(3) If a person despises the trials God sends or allows their way, for sanctification purposes or fails to persevere, God withdraws the trials after a while. The person then simply floats through life. Now, this does not mean they won't make it to Heaven if they stay committed to living a life of holiness. It just means that the person remains an onlooker who isn't fit to be used for the Kingdom. They are like the older generation of the Israelites, who wandered around aimlessly in the wilderness for forty years and never made it to the promised land (besides Joshua and Caleb). God tried them time after time, and finally gave up on them.

So, you ask, "Does that mean God afflicts His own children"? Here is the psalmist's answer: *"For thou, O God hast proved us: thou hast tried us as silver is tried (Psalm 66:10)*. Some folks have put this mildly: *"A Believer is like a teabag. He is not worth much until he has been through hot water"*. Rest assured, that our Lord will uphold and see you through your tribulations (James 1:12), beloved. Be blessed!

Shalom!