

Job 17:9

(The Righteous WILL Grow Stronger)

**"Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to their ways,
and those with clean hands will grow stronger."**

QUESTIONS for personal evaluation:

[Though Job 17:9 is the primary focus of this study, include anything else you may have learned from the Bible about this topic.]

A look at the passage

- Look at Job 17:9. Who said this? What type of circumstances was he in when he said this? Was he speaking truthfully? How does his statement compare or contrast with other verses in Scripture, such as Romans 8:28? Do any passages in Scripture disagree with this concept? (In other words, does Scripture give any exceptions to this statement?)
- What are the "ways" of the righteous? Who are the ones described as having "clean hands"? What do they grow stronger in? (While answering these questions, you may want to show the contrast between what Scripture says and what a merely "religious" person might say.)

A look at your life

Compare your life with what it was 1, 5 or 10 years ago. (This, of course, assumes that you have been a Christian for that length of time, or longer.) Are you still holding to the ways of God? Are you stronger (as defined by the Bible)? Have you found verses such as Romans 8:28 to be true in your life?

If your answer is "yes"...

- Think about a number of ways in which you are stronger. How did your strengthening come about; what were the circumstances that made you grow? Where did your strength come from? As you think about these things, do they teach you anything about God and the ways he works?

- Are there areas in your life in which there is still need for further strength? (If your answer is "yes," think about possible ways in which you might be hindering the process of growing stronger. Are there things you need to do, to remove any such hindrances?)

If your answer is "no"...

- How do you react to passages such as those mentioned in this study? How do you explain the fact that what they say is not evident in your life? Do you blame circumstances and people? Do you blame God? Do these verses imply anything about you?
- How are you going to respond to what you have learned in this passage? Are you going to respond in a manner that will enable you to be in the "yes" category, in 1, 5 or 10 years from now? [A "yes" answer will require a response (a change) of some type; a "no" answer doesn't. An indecisive answer is basically the same as saying "no"... and such a person has no reason to think that God is working in his life.]

If your answer is "a mixed yes and no"...

- Why? Examine the questions in both of the above categories, and answer those that may be relevant to you.

If you could not answer this question because you have been a Christian for only a short time...

- Think about how God has worked in your life. How are you different from what you were like before God saved you? To whatever degree applicable, try to answer some of the questions listed under the "yes" category.

If you could not answer this question because you are not a Christian...

- Is there anything that you have learned from the verses in this study? As you hear others respond to these questions, what are your reactions? You may want to look at some of the questions listed under the "no" category, and see if any of them are relevant to you.
- Would you like to someday be able to answer "yes" to this question? If so, what must you do? You may wish to talk to others about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Or better yet, read some of the New Testament yourself, to see what Jesus says about those who would desire to follow him. [A suggested place to start is in Matthew. If you do this, read it carefully, thinking about what it says. And most of all, remember to ask God to change your perspective, so that you will be able to understand (and live by) what you read!]

Additional things you can think about:

People tend to be inconsistent in the way we live. Sometimes Godly people have temporary setbacks in their walk with Christ. In contrast, people who do not know God may act "Christian" for a while - perhaps to a degree that others think that they are genuine believers. Yet there is a

difference between long-term lifestyle and temporary "setbacks." The "setback" will someday cease to exist; the lifestyle will define your character forever.

- How do temporary setbacks fit into the picture, in the life of a genuine disciple? [This question is not meant to imply that they *should* fit, or that there is any reason for them to fit. They can exist only if we are *not* living according to the new nature God has given us. Also, if they become our normal way of life, there is good reason to question whether or not we really have a new nature. (If they become our lifestyle, it would indicate that we were actually false-believers, like the people mentioned in 1 John 2:19.)]
- Scripture records the lives of many godly people (such as King David and the apostle Peter) who, at one time or another, fell into sin. None of them stayed that way, and each of them greatly regretted any sins he may have committed during that time. (In the long run, the principle of Job 17:9 was found to be true in their lives.) You may want to read about some of these people. What things can you learn from their lives that will discourage you from sinning, yet encourage you to not give-up in despair if you have done so?
- A contrasting study would be to look at examples of people (such as King Saul) who, for a while, looked like good examples, but who later turned away from the truth. The characteristics described in Job 17:9 did not exist in their lives. (They may have momentarily regretted their sins, but they kept going back to them. There is a radical difference between true repentance and remorse.)

We can rest assured that everything will *ultimately* result in good in the Christian's life. At the present, however, we cannot guarantee that everything in life will be pleasant, or that we will understand all the reasons for everything that happens to us. (Some of our questions may not get answered until we see Christ.) There will be trials, persecutions, and more - and if Romans 8:28 is true, it applies to all of them. Because of this (and for your own encouragement), you may wish to reflect on some of the following questions:

- What is the place of discipline in a Christian's life? (Hebrews 12; 1 Peter 1)
- How does God "prune" us to make us more "fruitful"? (John 15)
- What about trials and persecution? How does God use bad things to accomplish good? [You can look for examples - whether in the Bible, or in the lives of people you know or have read about. (If desired, you can use yourself as an example.) Note that the greatest example of God using evil to accomplish good involves the good that was accomplished through the horrible evil of Jesus being put to death on the cross! (See Acts 3:13-15.)]