

THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING

CHRISTIANS (NO. 3)

“Divine Chastisement is Our Hope of a Rapture.”

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We may have had the mistaken idea that God's correction (chastening) of us is just for a few months, or at the most a few years. Not so! The Apostle Paul thought the same thing as he, in desperation, prayed for the messenger of Satan to depart.

In reality, he was asking that his infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions and distress be removed. In God's answer to Paul, lies the revelation that we are seeking for ourselves. God's answer was a definite NO! Paul's road was not to be smoothed out. There would continue to be hindrances of all kinds: ship wrecks, danger from robbers, danger from his countrymen the Jews, and danger from false brethren working behind his back. He would be without food at times, be in pain at times and cold at times for lack of proper clothing.

We need to see that the Lord was using all these things to correct His apostle and keep him in line. He must not be exalted above measure because of the many great and wonderful revelations. In simple language, the Lord was chastening His servant using His pruning hook to lop off unfruitful branches. He was burning out the dross by sending him through the fire. He was fanning Paul with His fan of tribulation to blow away the chaff. He was perfecting his character by the means of chastisement! May God's grace do the same for us as He prepares us for rapture.

These dealings were not to be for a few months, or a few years, but God's

dealings with Paul, through the messenger of Satan, was to last as long as he lived. But how glorious was the final outcome of God's dealings with His servant. When it was Paul's time to depart, he could turn to the messenger of Satan and ask in triumph, **“O, death where is thy sting? O, grave where is thy victory?”** (I Cor. 15:55)

God's fires had burned away his dross. His big fan had blown away the chaff. His pruning hook had cut away the unwanted branches. His pride had been subdued, patience had been learned, and his doubts concerning God's dealings with him had been replaced with a great faith. Yes, Bride of Christ, chastisement is God's way of saving us from our flesh and preparing us for Rapture.

So then, when the Apostle Peter was teaching about the suffering that our Lord Jesus went through he said, **“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, ARM YOURSELVES LIKEWISE WITH THE SAME MIND.....”** (I Pet. 4:1) That is to say, “Make up your mind that God has appointed His Elect a certain amount of suffering, and that by faith in Him we must go through it, even as He did.”

There is a type in the Old Testament that is so precious to the Bride in this hour concerning the purging she

is experiencing. It has to do with the candle stick of beaten gold in Ex. 25:31. **“And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold, OF BEATEN WORK SHALL THE CANDLESTICK BE MADE.....”**

In referring to this scripture, the Prophet made the following statement:

QUOTE: CHURCH AGE BOOK, PAGE 81, “But not only is the candlestick of gold, it is of BEATEN GOLD. Hand-crafted of beaten gold, according to her blue prints which were SPIRIT GIVEN. Outside of her Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, was ever a people so beaten and purged as the Bride of Jesus Christ? Surely, she is filling up the sufferings that Christ has left behind. Her goods are despoiled. Her life is in jeopardy. She is accounted as sheep for the slaughter. She is killed all the day long. She suffers much, but in it all she retaliates not, neither does she cause others to suffer. Worthy of the Gospel is this lovely Bride of Christ. And as Gold is malleable, whereas brass will break with the beating, this GOLD OF GOD will bear her suffering for the Lord, not bowed, not broken, not destroyed, but formed as a thing of beauty and a joy forever by the trials and testings of life.” (End quote)

Did you notice that the prophet referred to the blueprint GOD gave for

the making of the candlestick? He said the directions were SPIRIT GIVEN. So are the directions SPIRIT GIVEN for the ordering of the steps of the good people of the Bride. Each step is ORDERED by the Lord (Ps. 37:23) so as to rid her of all dross. She will end up pure gold, beaten on the anvil of God until her character shines forth in the gross darkness of this evil age.

This then, answers the questions so often asked, Why do we have to go through so many things that seem to be so against us? Why does the Christian life have to be such a strain, at least when considered with our natural mind?

Here we get a glimpse into the great infinite mind of God. What human mind could have conceived the thought of joining together the Eternal Soul and Spirit of God with a lump of clay? What two things could be so little alike as the spirit of Satan in the clay, flesh part of man, and the soul of God that would be in his inner being by the New Birth?

Two opposite spirits in one body! Now the answer to our question concerning the warfare that rages within us comes into clear view. Never will the Spirit of God and the spirit of Satan agree. We are pulled in two different directions, but our God gets glory by proving that He that is in the soul is greater than he that is in the flesh.

To prove His power and wisdom, God allowed Satan to place his spirit in the human race through the sexual sin in Eden, but all the time it was God's plan to place His own Seed in the hearts of His Elect at their physical birth. At God's own time He would water this seed and produce a New Birth in them.

Although Satan's plan to destroy the human race seemed to be working, it

fell immeasurably below the sacred mystery of God's plan, which plan was a UNION between the elect Bride and the Lord of Glory. The scriptures have much to say about this mysterious UNION.

John 14:20, "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."

I Cor. 6:17, "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit."

Eph. 5:30-32, "For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. This is a great MYSTERY, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Satan could not have known that our great God would take the very bodies that he had perverted and indwell then Himself, and save them from destruction by uniting them to Himself in a UNION that nothing could separate. (Rom. 8:38-39) It was because we stood *eternally related* to Him through our first spiritual creation that He was pleased to undertake for us and restore the UNION that had been lost.

Adam, and all other Elect, had been *connected or related* to God from before the world was. This UNION with the Creator Himself is the foundation for all the spiritual blessings of the Bride. If there had been no connection with Him, there could have been no regeneration. Only the Elect can be born again!

One would think that after we had received the Holy Ghost, Himself, and had been shown the Redeemer, King Jesus in His Glory, that we would henceforth seek no other attractions. We would think that once we had quenched our thirst at the "Fountain of Living Waters", we would no longer

desire to drink from the "Broken Cisterns." Surely, now that we have received a foretaste of Heaven, we will not desire anything that the world has to offer! But, the "OLD NATURE" is still in us unchanged, and though the power of our first Love subdues his activities to a degree, still he is very much alive, and we sometimes fail.

It is because of this that our Father God must set out to "Crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts." This He does in various ways through His chastening and scourging. He must tear us away from the world and point our hearts toward Heaven. He must make the grapes of earthly joys bitter to our taste so that we no longer seek them. It is earthly disappointments and being disillusioned in our worldly pursuits that turns our hearts to God.

While the Hebrews could enjoy the land of Goshen they were content. Hard and cruel bondage was needed to make them ready to leave for the promised land. Because the fallen nature remains in us we are filled with a spirit of independence. We are like wild colts, unbroken for bridle or harness. Chastisement is planned to empty us of this *self-confidence* and make us feel our weakness and helplessness. Only then will any man turn to God in complete surrender.

Hosea 5:15, "In their affliction they will seek Me early." Whoever was the looser by seeking the Lord? Then surely afflictions are for our profit! Trials and troubles drive us to our knees. Sickness and sorrow make us seek the Lord in desperation. These things are bitter indeed to the flesh, but they are a tonic that God has chosen to use to separate us unto himself.

This truth is vividly set forth in Psalms 107. Please read verses 11-28. Note that it is when men are **"brought down"**, when they are **"afflicted"**, when they are **"at their wits end"** that they cry unto the Lord in their trouble. When in deep trouble our prayers are no longer MECHANICAL and FORMAL, but they become EARNEST indeed. It is the **"Effectual, fervent prayers of a righteous man that availeth much."** (James 5:16)

When I discover that the fire in my wood stove has died down, I do not always put in more wood, but simply stir it with a poker. And so does our all wise God, in *mercy* and *grace*, use His poker of adversity in order that the flames of our love and devotion may burn more brightly.

It is a fact that we all delight in the good times. The times when we are made to **"Lie down in green pastures"** and the periods when we are led beside **"the still waters."** Yet, it is also a fact that the green pastures and the still waters by themselves would not be for God's *glory* or our highest good. And why not? Because our hearts and minds would soon be more occupied with the *blessings* rather than the *Blesser, Himself*.

At times, the sheep of His pasture must be brought into the dry and desolate wilderness that they may be made more aware of their dependency on the Great Shepherd. It was his painful and troublesome **"Thorn in the flesh"** that taught Paul the blessedness of the text, **"My Grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."** (II Cor. 12:9)

This writer spent two and one-half years aboard ship during World War II, the most of which was in the North At-

lantic. It was during the stormiest weather that our captain gave the most heed to the steering of our ship. So it is in seasons of stress and grief that we are most moved upon to turn the steering of our frail bark over to the Chief Helmsman, Jesus Christ.

If then, trials and tribulations, as controlled by our Father God, produce such delightful fruits of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, long-suffering and etc., then why do we not welcome chastisements that are for our profit? Why do we fret and fume under the Hand of His love that is come to perfect us in our character? Why indeed, except that we have failed in the revelation of the Word that tells us it is Himself, and not Satan, controlling our troubles. Why, except that we fail to see His loving purpose behind it all.

If we were drowning and another pulled us safely to the shore by our arm, would we turn and sue him if he dislocated our shoulder? If towed to shore by the hair of our head, would we turn and sue for the loss of our beautiful hair? Then, would any Christian in his right spiritual mind, dare to pray, "Lord, don't ever let me be afflicted, or tried, or distressed in any way, no matter what spiritual good it would produce in me. And, if we would be unwilling, or afraid, to pray in such a manner, why should we do so much murmuring when these things come?

Why should we fear the dark valleys of tribulation in which the Lord afflicts our body in order to better the soul? After all, He has promised to deliver us out of every affliction! **"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him from them all."** (Ps. 34:19)

Heb. 12: 11, **"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."**

In Isaiah 27:9, our afflictions are compared to a *physic* (laxative) that purges poisonous materials out of the body. In Jer. 4:3, they are compared to plowing up and breaking ground so as to receive seed that it may grow. Should not we rejoice in the fact that God will not leave us alone in our carnality? Should we not praise Him for making us fit to spend eternity with Him? Ought not we to love Him and kiss the Hand that is making us holy?

When Christians become sick, they will swallow the bitterest kind of medicine trying to heal the flesh. They will lay down for an operation that is to cut out and remove diseased parts. But, how we fret and fume when called on to endure Divine Chastisement that is sent to burn out the dross, blow away the chaff, and prune away unproductive branches from our spiritual man.

What is needed first is a revelation that makes us conscious of our indwelling corruptions. I John 1:8, **"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."** On the heels of this first revelation, we need a second one that convinces us of our inability to change ourselves by the power of our own will.

Rom. 7:18, **"For I know that in me (That is in my flesh.) dwelleth no good thing, for to WILL is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not."**

Jer. 13:23, **"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his**

spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”

The all important thing to see is that if the Believer is left to himself, he would never seek grace to patiently endure the trials. Still less, would he ever see that his hardships would produce the “Peaceable fruit of righteousness.” (Heb. 12:11) If left to ourselves, we would never have the faith to say concerning our chastisements, “Thy will be done.” When left to ourselves we continue to chafe and kick like “A bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.” (Jer. 31:18) If left to ourselves, we would do as Job and “Curse the day of our birth.” (Job 3:1) If left to ourselves, we would never understand that our sufferings are among the “All things” working together for our ultimate good. (Rom. 8:28)

No, dear Bride, such Holy exercises of heart are not the product of our fallen nature, but they are the gracious and lovely fruits of the Holy Ghost. And consider the miracle of it, that He would bring them forth in spite of our often unfriendly and uncongenial soil. Our attitude toward God’s ordering of our steps (Ps. 37:23) is the key to spiritual growth. To understand His loving motive, is to bow before His wisdom and His ordering of our lives so that we benefit from every circumstance of life. To rebel, is to miss the spiritual benefits intended.

QUOTE: HEBREWS BOOK CHAPTER FOUR, PAGE 126.

“You mustn’t question anything unto God. (In an accusing sort of way.) For the footsteps of the righteous are ordered of the Lord. And every trial is put upon you to prove you. (Notice who is the Author of the trials, GOD, not Satan.) And the Bible said, “They are more precious to you than gold.” So if God lets a few light afflictions happen to you, remember, it’s for your correction. Every Son that commeth to God must first be CHASTENED of God and TRIED, child trained. There’s no exceptions. It’s every Son that commeth. AND THESE AFFLICTIONS ARE DONE, OR BROUGHT ABOUT TO SEE WHAT ATTITUDE YOU WILL TAKE. SEE, IT’S GOD ON THIS PROVING GROUND. THAT’S ALL EARTH IS, A PROVING GROUND, AND WHERE HE’S TRYING TO PROVE YOU.”

In closing, it needs to be said that there must be a balance between God seeing no sin in His Bride, as far as the souls being endangered is concerned, and in His seeing our sins of the flesh and being duty bound to correct them through chastening and scourging with the rod.

It is a blessed fact beyond compare that we are already “Accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6) and “Complete in Him.” (Col. 2:10) At the same

time, it is just as much a scriptural fact that in Heb. 12:7-10 it is the saved and righteous Sons that are chastened. It is the fact of their Sonship that brings about the chastening.

And so, we must conclude that even though our iniquities are forgiven and our sins covered, and the Lord will not impute sin unto us (Rom. 4:7-8), the flesh man will have to stand correction. If our hearts are inclined toward certain sins, God will chasten us concerning those sins until they become so unpleasant to us that we forsake them.

Ps. 89:29-34 relays God’s thoughts to us on this subject. “His seed also will I make to endure forever, and His throne as the days of Heaven. If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments, THEN WILL I VISIT THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS WITH THE ROD, AND THEIR INIQUITY WITH STRIPES. NEVERTHELESS, MY LOVING KINDNESS WILL I NOT UTTERLY TAKE FROM HIM, NOR SUFFER MY FAITHFULNESS TO FAIL. MY COVENANT WILL I NOT BREAK, NOR ALTER THE THING THAT IS GONE OUT OF MY LIPS.”

May we receive chastisement and learn the lessons they are sent to teach us. Amen.

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