

## OUR DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES IN CONNECTION WITH SUFFERING AND TRIALS...NO. 2

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We felt led to continue the subject of last month's sermon concerning the victory that faith gives us. We have stated that there is a wrong teaching that is come to confuse God's Elect. It is that there is a faith that can elevate us above the trials and tests that God has ordained for us. But, the truth is, no amount of praying can change God's mind about the crucifying of this flesh that is His enemy. **"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."** (Gal. 5:17)

How then does God crucify this flesh of ours? He has ordained certain trials and test for us as individuals that are geared to bring us to the end of trusting self. My trials may well be different from yours and yours from your neighbors, but the Lord knows every heart and the exact things that are needed to purify each one. But, we can be certain of one thing: this crucifying, or purifying, is not brought to pass by the Master skirting us around our furnaces that have been heated just for us. **"He will have a tested and a tried people."** (Acts 14:22) We, through much tribulation, enter into the Kingdom of God. This teaching that declares that "No harm can come to an obedient servant of God" must be examined in the Word. May I say that it depends on what we suppose to be "harmful?" What is good for the spirit, or soul, might well be considered, by the natural mind, to be harmful to the flesh. The spiritual mind knows that when the flesh is subdued, the spirit and soul are benefited, so what is our definition of "harmful"?

To declare that God will always pacify our flesh at the expense of our spiritual man is far from the teaching of the Scriptures, and it seems to this writer

that some are teaching this when they say, "No harm can come to a Son or Daughter of God whose faith is holding." We ask again, "What is harm?" Is that which adds to faith and produces character harmful? Certainly not. But, as we have stated, it might well be considered so by the carnal mind whose concern is for flesh only.

Let us look in the Scriptures and see what God considers to be good for the Inner Man. It may be quite a shock to some who suppose that His goal is to "allow no suffering" or "harm", to come to the flesh. We could say that, in one way, there are two God's in the church today. The God of the Scriptures and the God that carnal man thinks He is. A prophet came and said, "We need to know the God of the Bible, what His ways are, so that we may be able to face the problems of life with real assurance." (Found in "Be Certain of God.")

To be able to face the problems of life with real assurance, we must understand God's goals for us and the means that He uses in order to accomplish these goals. His dealings with His own are very plain in the scriptures and cannot be ignored except to our own hurt. Since He never changes, we can know that the Bible examples of His ways are still in effect today. Deut. 8:2, **"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart..."** In I PETER 1:7 Peter said, **"God will try our faith with fire."** In Ps. 81:7 God said, **"I proved thee at the waters of**

**Meribah."** The God of the Bible always PROVES His People. His program is to keep the flesh under subjection to the Spirit, while man's carnal program is to preserve the flesh.

God calls us to fulfill certain parts of His great overall plan, then He prepares us for that particular work. By far, the largest percent of the time we do not even know what that work is until we are some distance down the road of life. Nevertheless, the Great Creator and Planner has been ordering our steps in such a way that we will be fitted for it. So it was in the life of a young man named Joseph. He was a spiritual man and obedient to the God he served. So spiritual in fact, that it caused resentment and hatred in his brothers who cast him into a pit, and later sold him as a slave. Down in Egypt, he was thrown into prison on a false charge of rape and spent several years there.

It is certain that Joseph's flesh suffered during these trials, but it is just as certain that the sufferings were ordained of God for the spiritual benefit of His servant. By faith we can say today that in the life of the Elect, the things that would seem "harmful" to the natural mind have been ordained of God for our spiritual good. And this is true even when our suffering in the flesh is involved. Is it then harmful? It depends on whether or not we are looking at it through our natural eyes, or through the eyes of the Word.

Spiritual man will go to the Bible and learn about the God whose **"Thoughts are as high above ours as the Heavens are the earth."** (Isa. 55:9) Our goal

is to know our God. The Greeks worshipped an unknown God, but an unknown God cannot be worshipped properly, nor trusted fully.

QUOTE: BE CERTAIN OF GOD PAGE 13, "This poor little woman, she knew He was God. As that (meal) barrel went down, down, down, and circumstances got worse and worse. BUT GOD WAS LETTING IT GET THAT WAY." (End quote)

Do we understand this kind of a God, or do we only know the God that our natural mind has conjured up, the One who sends only things that bless the flesh? God's way is to try us and test us. He will prove us to see if we are real Believers or only Make-Believers. He sets out to make Believers out of us Unbelievers! What Grace! What Mercy and Love!

CONT. PREVIOUS QUOTE: "He will let you be anointed and prayed for, then make you worse and say, "Come on Satan, put him to the test. Put him to a test now, I know he took my word for it. He puts our faith to the test to see if we really believe He is God."

PAGE 14: "Daylight broke. She said the little fellow (her son) cried all night for something to eat. What will I do with one little handful of meal?"

PAGE 15: "Oh how gloomy it must have been, death laying at the door. Her and her son had to eat one little piece of the hoe-cake and die. That was all of it! And sometimes, right in the midst of gloom we hear His voice. (End quote)

Do we know that kind of a God? The natural mind will rebel against the God of the Bible! Do we know the kind of a God that will let death come to the door? If not, then we still have some things to learn about Him. Do we know the kind of a God who will let a man be desperately sick for so long that he is in total despair, and cries out, "It would be good if I had never been born?" Job learned about Him. Was Job "harmed" by the dealings of God? It depends on whether you are looking at his flesh or his spiritual man. His flesh suffered

perhaps more than any man except Christ Jesus, but his spiritual man became giant size in the end.

Do we know the kind of a God who would promise His Prophet, Moses, that He would deliver the Israelites, then harden Pharaoh's heart concerning the making of the bricks, so that the Israelites had to gather their own straw for them, which action turned Moses own people against him? This is the God of the Bible, and He is a far cry from being like the God we have imagined in our minds. We want a God who will preserve the flesh at all costs, but He is a God who is going to preserve the Soul at all cost.

Do we know the kind of a God who would send His faithful maiden, the Virgin Mary, on a long tortuous trip by mule to pay taxes, and her ready to go into labor at any minute? Apparently, she was in labor when they arrived in Bethlehem, but all the motels were full. Didn't God know she was in a very precarious position, and that she would need a room? The carnal mind reasons that the very least He could have done was to give her a motel room. But His Son was to be born in a stable, with no midwife and no conveniences.

Do we know the kind of a God who told Daniel he should never stop praying, then have him thrown in the lion's den for obeying? What kind of a reward was that for an obedient servant of God? It was God testing His Prophet, and He will test all His called-out Children. He has a right to prove us. Daniel, being a man like the rest of us, was no doubt praying, "Lord, you wouldn't let them throw me in that den full of hungry lions, would you?" But, God did let them! Then He went right in the den with him and stood as a Pillar of Fire between Daniel and the lions. God never promised to keep us "from" the trials, but He did promise to save us "out" of them.

Do we know the kind of a God who would lead the Israelites to a bitter water hole, and let their children cry for wa-

ter? No doubt the Israelites said, "Why did you stop here Moses? We can't drink this water! But, it was not Moses' plan to stop there. He stopped because the Pillar of Fire stopped there. It was God on His proving ground.

Do you and I know the kind of a God who let the Israelites scream in fear at the Red Sea, with mountains on each side and the Army of Pharaoh bearing down on them from the rear? Do we believe that God could have led them around that place of trial? Certainly He could have, but He was proving them to see what was in their hearts. Can you and I accept the kind of a God whose goal is still to prove us to see what is in our hearts? How far are we willing to go with Him, and trust him, when we have gone as far as we can go?

Three Hebrew men went as far as they could go and then they went a step further. The King had said bow to the image I have made or you will be thrown into the furnace. They said our God can deliver us, but if He chooses not to, we will not worship a false God. Dear Friends, do you believe that God is still looking for those who will go as far as they can go, and then take the last step? It is the opinion of this writer that God is calling upon His Bride to go as far as they can go, and then take one more step!

Abraham went as far as he could go, and then he took the last step. He took his son to the mountain. He took wood for a burnt offering. He built an altar, and then, when he could go no further he took the knife to plunge it into his son's heart. God so honored that man's taking that last step, that he made an unconditional covenant with him, telling him that all his spiritual seed would overcome the enemy!

We know that Abraham was God's Elect. God chose him to be the very Father of Faith to the Elect of all ages. But, did we know that this same God was duty bound to test every Elected Son and Daughter of God to the same degree that He tested Abraham? There

may come a time in the life of the Bride member when they will be tested to that final point. They may be required to take one more step after they have gone as far as they can go.

QUOTE: POSSESSING THE ENEMY'S GATES PAGES 6-7, "What about Abraham with Isaac, on the mountain, the one the promise was given (to), and by his loyalty and his knowing, and his faith in Jehovah, it's through that and that alone that God looked down and said, 'His seed shall possess the gates.' ....Then if He let Abraham be tested to that final point (the point of slaying his own son), HE'S GOT TO TEST YOU AND ME TO THAT FINAL MOMENT, that time of decision when everything is away from you, you have to stand alone there. Hallelujah! That's it. (End quote)

In calling upon Abraham to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering, God submitted his faith to a time of terrible, fiery, ordeal. God's promises to Abraham centered in Isaac. Ishmael had been cast out and Isaac's descendants alone were to be the blessed seed among whom God would have His Church. How could Abraham believe the Divine Command to slay his son, and at the same time believe the Divine Promise that Isaac would bring forth seed? The command to slay Isaac was not only against natural affection, but it was against all natural reasoning.

What some may not be aware of is the fact that, in like manner, God still tests the faith of His Elect today. He calls on them to perform acts of obedience which are contrary to their natural affections, and which are opposed to natural reasoning. At times, God has allowed a Son or a Daughter of His to be attracted to an unbeliever, even to the point of considering marriage, then has come to them that piercing Word, "**Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.**" (II Cor. 6:14) It is a time of great testing.

Some have had membership in a church where they were "born and

raised," so to speak. Their whole family tree has been connected to that same denomination, and then God has shown that His Word is being dishonored, and He has spoken, "**Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord.**" (II Cor. 6:17) He has commanded to leave those who are very dear to us in the flesh, it is a time of great trial, but the call of God cannot be disregarded.

But, you may ask, when are we put to the trial of actually offering up our Isaac, as was Abraham? It can happen when God asks us to submit to His strokes of providence, as when He takes away our dearly beloved ones. Our Prophet, William Branham, was asked to "Give up his Isaac" when the Lord took his wife, Hope, then his baby daughter. What a time of terrible trial he was put through, but look at the benefits you and I have reaped from his obedient submission. He went on to be used of God to open The Seven Seals and bring the Bride to rapturing faith through The Message. God struck His Prophet in the place where his love was set, in the very place where the trial would be the greatest. Do we know that kind of a God? Would some in the message declare that Satan was the Author of this trial? Then, I would respectfully say to you, "You need a revelation of the Sovereignty of the Mighty God we serve."

Let us notice that God did not call upon Abraham to submit to the final test until He had prepared him to take the final step of faith. Gen. 22:1 "**And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham.**" After what things? After the things that he had already endured! He had been called on to leave his home and his people, his journey to Canaan, and living there in tents, the long, long wait for the promised heir. Now that he has passed through a great fight of afflictions, and his faith has grown strong, he is called upon to go through yet another and much more severe test.

God educates His Children a little bit at a time. As we grow in Grace and

Faith, harder tasks are assigned to us. We must pass through deeper waters that, in previous years, would have drowned us. More and more opportunities are presented to the Elect for manifesting an increased faith in their Lord. It is not the raw recruit who is called upon to face the kind of trials of which we speak, but the scarred veteran. Think it not strange then, Message Believer, if the Lord is now sending you severer tests than He did some years ago. Often, it is when not a cloud appears on our horizon that God sends a severe test. It is like a heavy clap of thunder out of a clear sky that some of our hardest trials come. It was when the cup of Abraham's joy was full that God gave him the seemingly inhuman command to offer up his son. He had seen God's Word fulfilled through the miracle birth of the son, he had given a great feast to celebrate his being weaned from the breast, he had seen Ishmael cast out, and his horizon seemed clear, as far as the promise of his seed through Isaac was concerned. But, it was at that very time that the thunder rolled and the very ground must have shook under Abraham's feet. He was commanded to kill the son!

It was just after God had pronounced Job to be a perfect man that Satan was loosed on him. It was after Paul had been caught up to the third Heaven, where he received abundance of Revelations, that a Messenger of Satan was assigned to buffet him. It was just after Jeremiah had obeyed his God and preached to King Zedekiah that his city would be delivered into the hands of the King of Babylon that he was placed in a dungeon where there was no water, but mire, and Jeremiah sunk in the mire, where he stayed many days.

Why would a loving Father put His own offspring through such terrible trials? It is for our own sake, to discover to us what is in our hearts, to show us whether or not we really trust Him. God is trying His Bride today and putting to the proof the Grace and Faith that He

has delivered to us through an End-Time Message. He does this for our benefit and for His own Glory. He is determined to make it known that He has a people on Earth who will forsake any comfort, and endure any misery before they will forsake their number one duty, which is to trust their God. He will show to the enemy and to the worldly church, that His Bride loves Him more than their own lives. He will hold Her up before the world and say, "She is willing to trust Me in the darkness of the night, while I hide Myself from Her."

We never have more clear proof of His Love and Grace toward us than when we experience Him delivering us from the sore trials He puts us through. Trials are God's stepping stones to rapturing faith. They are the best way to prove to an unbelieving world that it is absolutely safe to trust in our Heavenly Father.

At this point in the Bride Christian's walk before the Lord, there is great need for warning against the subtle sin of Spiritual Pride. Like a creeping paralysis, this sin that God hates will come and attempt to poison the mind of those who would live by faith. The trap presented is that the person, by their own merit, has somehow been able to conjure up the faith that he is living by. For-

getting what the great Apostle Paul said in Gal. 2:20, "**The life which I now live in the flesh I live by THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD**", we can be made to think more of ourselves than we ought. We can be made to boast of the faith God sends.

Rather than hold to the scripture in Rom. 12:1 that allows that our best obedience is only our, "**Reasonable service**", and that by our greatest efforts we have not earned the faith that is being "**Delivered to us**" (Jude 3), we are moved to look down on and condemn those who have not been delivered such faith. God well knows that folly is bound up in the hearts of all His Children, but the unsuspecting Child may not be aware of God's frown. It is quite possible for us to continue down the road of false pride, condemning, criticizing, and judging those who cannot seem to walk in our footsteps, until our all-wise Father will allow us to go no deeper into this sin of sins.

As a Son or Daughter of God, we must be disciplined for wrong doing. The Rod is necessary to rebuke, to subdue, and to humble. At whatever cost it may be to the flesh, our Father will produce in us a meek spirit. Chastisement has as one of its main goals the breaking down of False Spiritual Pride. It is well to remember that Father is correcting us

in Love and not smiting us in wrath. It is one of the greatest blessings for which we have to thank Him.

God's wrath that flows out of His anger toward the unrepentant and unsaved is a different thing than His chastening which flows out of His Love towards the members of His own Family. Chastening is sent to teach us the plagues of our hearts, and show us our hidden transgressions. God will certainly chasten us to save us from being unduly lifted up because of the faith He has given us. There was some self-satisfaction and self-righteousness in Job at the beginning, but at the end, when he was brought face to face with the Holy God, he "**abhorred himself.**"

This writer can testify that when we are shown to be guilty of this false pride, we also will hate ourselves. We will repent before the people, and before the Lord, and fall back on His mercy. Grace and Mercy are our only hope, and when that is forgotten, we must and we will be, reminded.

This then is the Word that must be kept constantly before us, "**For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? (From God) Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? (I Cor. 4:7) Amen!**"

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