

PERFECT LOVE THROUGH SUFFERING

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I would like to call our attention to a statement made by our Prophet, William Branham, and then use it as a foundation for this sermon. No doubt, many of us are quite familiar with it, but I wonder if we have truly considered the drastic importance of what was said. It has to do with Perfect Love!

REJECTED KING, JEFF. 5-15-1960, PAGE 21-22, "And I looked this way and that way, and they were coming by the thousands. And I said, 'I don't understand this.' I said, 'Why they.....' And here come Hope—that was my first wife. She run and never said, 'My husband.' She said, 'My precious Brother.' And when she hugged me, there was another woman standing there that'd hugged me, and then Hope hugged this woman, and each one....I thought, 'This has to be something different, it can't be. There's something.....' Oh, would I ever want to ever go back to that old carcass again. I looked around there and I thought, 'What is this?' And I looked real good, and I said, 'I can't understand this.' But Hope seemed to be like aoh a guest of honor. She was no different, but just like a guest of honor.

And I heard a voice then that spoke to me that was in the room, said, 'This is what you preached was the Holy Ghost. This is perfect love. And nothing can enter here without it.'

I am more determined than ever in my life that it takes perfect love to enter there." (End quote)

I would call our attention to the last paragraph in the preceding statement. Brother Branham said,

"I heard a voice that spoke to me that was in the room, (It) said, 'THIS IS WHAT YOU PREACHED WAS THE HOLY GHOST, THIS IS PERFECT LOVE, AND NOTHING CAN ENTER HERE WITHOUT IT.'" We who believe the Prophet believe that he did hear such a voice. He did not say who it was that spoke, but we know the Holy Scriptures back up what Brother Branham said he heard.

In I Cor. 13:1-3, Paul said, **"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.**

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

If we read this whole chapter, we see that Paul's subject is PERFECT LOVE and that he understood that no matter what else we could lay claim to, in the way of seeming to be spiritual, if this PERFECT LOVE was missing we have accomplished nothing. This is a hard pill for the natural mind to swallow, and let it be said that this writer does not

preach this because he supposes he has arrived at this place, but rather because he sees his own hardness of heart and lack of compassion, and has therefore been called to task by the Holy Ghost! This sermon is for the writer first, and then for whomever else may need it.

I would like to relate some other things Brother Branham said about LOVE before we go into detail about how this Love comes.

QUOTE: "WHEN LOVE PROJECTS" PAGE 2, "I think if one thing is needed in the great universal church of God tonight it is love. We do not need out gifts and our emotions as much as we think we do, though they are wonderful and to God we give praise that we have them....but if these gifts are not governed by love they are not effective.

Love should govern the home....a home that is not disciplined by love is not much of a home. If the husband and wife do not solemnly love one another, they cannot trust one another. Remember, love is the strongest force in the world....and instead of resting our faith upon some emotion, which is alright....or on some gift, which is alright...like shouting or speaking in tongues, etc., we should rest our faith upon the Love of God. We must come back to this principle.....love first, then those other things. If we did this, our churches would progress

much faster, for God is love.”
(End quote)

QUOTE: “WHEN LOVE PROJECTS” PAGE 3, “Nothing is greater than love...it brings trust, it brings faith, it brings pardon. Love has no fear, love casts out fear. I have found a great deal of fear among Christians.....this is not right and should not be so. Fear is the lack of confidence, but if you love and have confidence, you will cast away fear. God wants you to have love and confidence in Him...this will cast away your fears and bring you to serve Him with a greater love.” (End quote)

QUOTE: “WHEN LOVE PROJECTS” PAGE 6. “I am going to tell you something else.....you may class me a fanatic after this, but I’ll tell you anyhow. All my ministry has been wrapped around love.....if I can love, or be in sympathy with whatever is before me.....something happens!” (End quote)

Much more could be written concerning what the Prophet and the scriptures say about Love, but knowing that this sermon is for the Bride, who already knows the Message and the scriptures, we will now seek an answer to the question, “How does this love come?” When a Bride member is BORN-AGAIN, he is at once placed in God’s Holy Ghost Training School. These Elect of God are destined for ruler ship with the Lord Jesus Christ, not only in this life (Rom. 5:17), but in the Kingdom that is to come (Rev. 20:6). Since AGAPE LOVE is the number one qualification for exercising authority in God’s domain, both here now and in the one to come, then this school is

for bringing the Bride into this LOVE!

Again we ask, “How does this love come?” Do we automatically have it when we are born-again? Does the changing of the soul, our old one for God’s own Soul, place this Perfect Love in us? We do not say that we don’t receive a certain degree of it at this time, but we point out that there is a great difference between “Purity of Heart” which comes at once, and in the “Maturity of Spiritual Growth” which can only come over a period of time and which is a result of God’s Love coming in. We believe that the Prophet and the scriptures teach that the depth of this Love only comes in the School of Suffering.

Realizing that many in the Message are not at this time seeing the need for any suffering, and in fact preach that it is unnecessary, we want to be very careful how we teach this asking the Lord to put words in our mind as we write. We are in no way coming against God’s plan of Divine Healing, nor are we teaching that we are not to have the victory over all Devil things. What we will ask, and seek to answer is, “What is victory?” Is it a place that we can reach in exercising faith where we can avoid all infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecution, and distresses (II Cor. 12:7-10)?

The answer is NO! For a time in his walk with God, the Apostle Paul supposed that he would reach such a place. He prayed three times (And I am sure he prayed desperately!) for the Lord to elevate him to this place. At first, he evidently thought that victory meant no more failures, no more attacks by the enemy, no

more distressing times, no more needs that were not met instantly, no more sickness that was not healed instantly, and no more times of total weakness where all he could do was lean on the Lord Jesus.

I say that this was Paul’s line of thought for a time, but then he had a most powerful revelation and one that the Bride must have today. He saw that he had misunderstood what victory really is. It is not reaching a place above all the trials and temptations of life, rather is it the Faith to trust the Lord God in the midst of whatever suffering our Father may choose to put us through. After his revelation, he said in II Cor. 12:10. “**Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong.**”

In Rev. 2:9, God said, “**I KNOW thy works and thy tribulations, and poverty, but thou art rich, and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the Synagogue of Satan.**” In teaching on this verse, the Prophet said as follows:

QUOTE: CHURCH AGE BOOK, PAGES 116-117. “Now the Lord God Almighty says, ‘I KNOW.’ There He is walking in the midst of His people. There He is, the Chief Shepherd of the flock, but does He hold back the persecution? Does He stem the tribulation? No, He does not. He simply says, ‘I KNOW your tribulation....I am not at all unmindful of your suffering.’ What a stumbling block this is to so many people. Like Israel, they wonder if God really loves them.

How can God be just and loving if He stands by and watches His people suffer? That is what they asked in Mal. 1:1-3, **'The burden of the Word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet we say, wherein hast Thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's Brother? Saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.'** You see, they could not figure out God's love. They thought that love meant no suffering. They thought that love meant a baby with parental care. But God said that His love was "elective" love. The proof of His Love is ELECTION....that no matter what happened, His Love was proven truly by the fact they were chosen unto salvation (because God hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth). He may commit you to death as He did Paul. He may commit you to suffering as He did Job. That is His prerogative. He is sovereign. But it is all with a purpose. If He did not have a purpose, then He would be the author of frustration and not of peace. His purpose is that after we have suffered awhile we would be made perfect, be established, strengthened and settled. As Job said, **'He puts strength in us.'** (Job 23:6b) You see He, Himself, suffered. He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. He was actually made perfect by the things that He suffered. Heb. 5:8-9 **"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all that**

obey Him." In plain language, the very character of Jesus was perfected by suffering. And according to Paul, He has left His church a measure of suffering that they, too, by their faith in God while suffering for Him, would come to a place of perfection. Why did He want this? Jas. 1:2-4, **"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."**

CONT. QUOTE: "Why does He stand by? The reason is in Romans 8:17-18, **"And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."** Unless we suffer with Him we cannot reign with Him. You have to suffer to reign. (The reason for this is that character simply is never made without suffering.) Character is a VICTORY, not a gift. A man without character can't reign because power apart from character is Satanic. But power with character is fit to rule." (End quote)

It is the writer's prayer that we may all be brought to a place of BALANCE in the Message and the scriptures concerning what true VICTORY is. In our Message, we are hearing some wonderful powerful sermons stressing the fact that we are to return to the place Adam held before the fall. In the sense that

we are to have total and complete victory over the enemy, I agree. But, if it is being implied that we can dodge all things that would produce suffering, then I must draw back. I hear warning bells going off in my Spirit when I hear Brothers preaching the same thoughts that Paul had about suffering, before his revelation. (He desired to dodge them all. He prayed to dodge them all.)

There is being a strong emphasis placed on the fact that the ideal Christian life is one of constant peace, unbroken joy, no infirmities, no distresses, and no bumps in the road, and steady material prosperity. It's true that the flesh wants all problems instantly solved, and it's also a fleshly thought that if they are not, then our faith is faulty. Dear Friends, this is simply not true! The Spirit-filled life is not one great big picnic; it is a WARFARE that calls us to press the battle. It calls for the crucifying of self, which is only accomplished by suffering and pain. II Tim. 2:3, **"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."**

In Hebrews chapter eleven, we see a group of people whose names have been placed in God's "Faith Hall of Fame." But, I am afraid that if some of us in the Message today were called upon to give an opinion concerning some people who were experiencing the same things those people did, we might conclude they did not have the victory. Heb. 11: 37-38 says of these mighty warriors of faith, that they, **"Wandered about in sheepskins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented... they wandered in deserts, and**

in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” Who would like to accuse these Elect Souls of not having faith when the Bible says they were people of great faith?

And so we ask again, what is Victory? Let it be said that it is not the absence of hardships, trials, afflictions, or the accumulation of property and wealth. Victory is that kind of faith that continues to trust God when confronted with all the things that these people in Hebrews eleven were confronted with. It is trusting God in good times and bad, in sickness and in health, in the abundance of material things and also in the absence of them. It is kissing the Hand that is ordering our steps through sorrow and heart-break, as well as through mountain-top experiences. Faith is our victory, no matter what circumstances our Lord has ordered for us.

May we bow before our sovereign God and accept His all-wise dealings with us, though it be through much tribulation that He leads. Our bounden duty is, “Trust Him anyway, though He slays us.”

If God healed everyone immediately, where would be the opportunity for us to exercise patience and cause our faith to grow stronger? It is true that He does Heal some immediately, but if we want to be completely honest, we will admit that many times He does not. This is God’s business, He knows what we each one need and when! If God delivered all of us from conflict, pressure, and all kinds of suffering at our first prayer, how could we ever persevere as the scripture says we must?

If the Lord Jesus, in His human body, could not be perfected without suffering, can we be brought to the place of the Perfect Love He had without it? When we remember that the Prophet was told that no one can enter that other dimension without it, we should be seeking it with all our hearts. But, the question is, “How do we come into it?” There is in all of us (in our flesh) that Law of Sin Paul spoke of in Rom. 7: 21-23, that causes us to be proud and boastful. This haughty spirit that came to us through the fall in Eden must be dealt with. God knows that only through suffering

do we learn to love those who are suffering. Until we have suffered, we will accuse those who are going through suffering of falling short in obedience, faith, and etc. We will be as Job’s comforters were, not having compassion, but rather a condemning spirit about us.

And so our all-wise God has prepared for us a “Satan’s Eden” in which we will experience sorrow, heart-break, disappointments, pain, pressure and suffering. Only by these things is our unlovely character softened and sweetened. Before we ourselves have done any suffering, how hard-hearted, arrogant, and overbearing some of us have been. How we have cut down some who were suffering unnecessarily, as we thought. This then, is why God must put us through the refining fires. This is why we must be assigned a “Messenger of Satan” to buffet us blow after blow, until SELF has been slain in us. May our God get on with His faithful work of perfecting His love in us. Amen!

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