

The Need for Suffering IV

By Greg Rangel

Throughout the last articles we have covered the need for suffering in the life of a Christian. Nobody likes to go through sufferings and tribulations in any way no doubt. But as we continue to walk faithfully with the Lord in this wicked world that we live in, we will have to face the facts that suffering will be part of the believers life. Not only because of the enemies that are constantly trying to attack us and make us fall. But also because the sufferings and the tribulations cause the believer to grow spiritually.

As Paul wrote in Romans 5:3, “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience;” Let us not forget that the rejoicing however is not in the tribulations themselves, but in the effects that the tribulations have. The tribulations that we go through contribute to the glory that we will receive once this life is over and done with (2 Corinthians 4:17-18, Romans 8:28).

The Greek word for “tribulations” is “Thilipsis,” which signifies, “being under pressure just like when the olives are brought under pressure when they are extracting the oil from them;” Tribulations, which includes persecutions, because persecution is a form of tribulations, is and will be part of the life of the Christians (2 Timothy 3:12, John 15:20, Acts 14:22, 1 Peter 4:12- 16).

Christians should not fear what the world can do to us. We ought to say as Paul said in Romans 8:18, “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.”

Paul wrote in Romans 5:4, “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience;” The Greek word for “patience” is “Hupomone” which has the understanding of “resistance.” That is, having the ability of resisting during great opposition. So patience. The Greek word for “experience” is “dokime” which signifies “to test if it is genuine.” This term is used when precious metals such like gold was tried to see if it was genuine. So through patience, it is shown to see if we are genuine or not. In other words, our faith is tried to see if we are real. Tribulations work in such a way in our life. As Peter 1:6-7, “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

What is your faith made of? Will you be able to resist during difficult times, during great opposition, and during great obstacles? Or will you give up? If your faith is genuine, then you will be able to resist during great tribulations. And even though it will be very painful, and very trying, you will not give up because you are real. But if your faith is not genuine, then you will so easily compromise your faith because of the difficult times that you are going through because you are trying to live as a Christian when perhaps you are not.

Paul also wrote in Romans 5:4, "...and experience hope." The Greek word for hope is "Elpis" which means "to wait with a great desire to obtain." So in other words, the sufferings and tribulations that we go through will cause us not only to grow spiritually, but they will also give us a greater and true hope for heaven. We will have a great desire to obtain.

This is the same hope that we see that the Old Testament saints had as well. Hebrews 11:13, 16a says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth...But now they desired a better country, that is, an heavenly..." (see Hebrews 11:36-40).

Even though they suffered, they did not lose hope. Their suffering contributed to their desire to go to heaven and to their spiritual growth. And we must also see that to be true with us as well. Our current sufferings in this world causes us to grow spiritually. Through tribulations we are made strong. Therefore we must endure tribulations and not give up.

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