

"Why Do Christians Have To Suffer?"

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Daniel 11:35 (KJV) And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.

It seems that the subject of Christian suffering has slipped from our pulpits and hence our vocabularies in this post-modern Christendom. This topic is not popular nor is it desired thus it is put away upon the back shelves of our minds. Yet, it is imperative that we understand that all Christians that are in love with Jesus, pursuing His likeness, seeking His face and following His footsteps will endure suffering!

We have not preached from our pulpits that a Christ-like character is wrought by a Christ-like suffering. We preach, "come to Jesus and He will make you happy, happy, happy!" We seemingly forget to announce that we must be willing to suffer for Him as well as be blessed by Him. Time and time again I hear from new-converts how they didn't expect the tidal wave of affliction that came shortly after their conversion. They have not been taught to count the cost (Luke 14:28) before beginning the journey. They didn't know there was a cost because the invitation was to come to Jesus because He wants to give you so many blessings. Yet, the cup of the Lord wasn't mentioned. (Matthew 20:22-23)

This cup is a cup of suffering that all hungry-hearted Christians must partake of! Jesus told the sons of Zebedee that they would most assuredly drink of this cup! These times of Christian suffering do not come to us because God is sadistic and cruel. Believe it or not these times are allowed because of God's infinite love. These afflictions serve the purpose of refining and purifying the heart so that we as lovers of God may see Him clearly!

Most of you have read Job. Job was so hungry after God. He was a perfect and upright man, a righteous man of God. Job prayed and served the Lord with all of his heart. He was a man of prayer and righteousness. Yet, great calamity came and his heart was tried with the fires of suffering. We know that Job was in great confusion during these times of duress and affliction.

Job 10:15 If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction; KJV

Job didn't understand why these times of hardship and suffering had come upon him. He began to wonder if he was really a godly man. He said: "Lord am I wicked?" Later we read that Job cried out to God in his distress "God, please leave me alone! I want to die! I wish I were never born!" Job, this man of God and faith thought God was torturing him unjustly and his mind was so confused about this time of affliction. Yet, we read in the 42nd chapter the following:

Job 42:5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. KJV

Job, at the end of this time of suffering, realized that he had spoken falsely against God. He repented of the things he had spoken against God and now we see Job saying that if he had not gone through this process of affliction and suffering he would not have been able to see God with his spiritual eyes! He said, I have heard of you God but I didn't know you the way I do now! He said, now I can see you with my spiritual eye! I was blinded before to the spiritual realm but now mine eyes have seen the King of Glory!

Isaiah 30:19-21 (TLB) 20 Though he give you the bread of adversity and water of affliction, yet he will be with you to teach you-with your own eyes you will see your Teacher.

Job would have never been able to see God if he had not gone through this sifting process. These times of affliction were not sent to destroy him but to purify him, to refine him! Just as fire purifies gold and silver these times of what Paul calls light afflictions are sent to us to refine us! We all seem to want a painless Pentecost but painless Pentecost's bring about retarded revelation! If you desire to grow up, if you desire to be pure and white, a chaste virgin that is presentable to Christ, you must go through the fires of affliction! If you want to see God, if you want to be a partaker of His divine nature you must be a partaker of His sufferings. It is written in Revelation 2 "fear not these things that are to come upon you!" Peter wrote saying embrace them with joy!.. Sound crazy? Nevertheless, His will be done!