

## ENDURING

Harmony M.B.C., Oct. 30, 2016

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**2Thess. 1:4** So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

**2Thess. 1:5** *Which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

**2Thess. 1:6** Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

**2Thess. 1:7** And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

Believers have a real difficulty with trying to explain why attempting to live a Christian life is always accompanied with a seeming firestorm of troubles. I think we make seeing things in a better light more difficult because we sometimes believe that woes come only to believers, and we allow that to color our view of how we see our experiences in contrast with other people who make no attempt to serve the Lord. And it is true that the very prosperity of most of the wicked acts like a sharp knife in our side, and we sometimes use their seemingly prosperous lives to make an excuse to complain about our own. We may cite David's explanation about it as part of the reason we are confused and perplexed about the obvious imbalance between what we go through and what a lot of folks who could care less about God experience. David said:

**Psalms 73:3-9** For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked. **4** For *there are* no bands in their death: but their strength *is* firm. **5** They *are* not in trouble *as other* men; neither are they plagued like *other* men. **6** Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them *as* a garment. **7** Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. **8** They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression: they speak loftily. **9** They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.

We also realize that while David's discourse explains how it is for many wicked people, it only actually seems to confuse the issue more. And we realize that when he tells us in vv. 17-19 what is to come of them, he is only explaining that understanding this fate of theirs caused him to quit being envious of them. Further, we can see that it is not an explanation of why the great difference exists between what the wicked are handed in this life and what tribulation believers go through. He says there: Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end. **18** Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. **19** How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

Now, since most of us don't have a really solid explanation about why this great difference exists between the experiences of the wicked and the experiences of true believers, most of the time, we are left with just saying, "It is the Lord's will that it be like this."

While it is the Lord's will true enough and while Jesus told us that we would suffer tribulation in this world, wouldn't you like to know why it must be so? Why can't we have a smoother road? Why can't we get some rest from the continual onslaught of the devil? Why can't we find a place in life where the sailing is smooth, the wind is not roaring, the rain is not beating down, when times are peaceful and we actually feel like we are resting in a soft recliner of smooth times? I hope to answer that in this message, using our text. I then want to close this message by pointing out that rest IS available to us, but we have to learn to recognize it for what it is and take advantage of it as it natively exists in our lives. When we can do that, then the constant upheavals of tribulation will have the potential to strengthen us rather than to tear us apart.

I. To start this journey, I want us to look at what elements are involved in this situation believers are in regarding persecutions and tribulations. We will be able to see the nature of the trials, and the outcome of them, either now, or in eternity. Let's keep in mind that we are looking at explanations about why believers need to experience persecutions and tribulation or troubles and trials.

- ◆ **1Pet. 4:12-13** Beloved, think it not strange concerning the **fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: **13** But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are **partakers of Christ's sufferings**; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be **glad** also with **exceeding joy**.
- ◆ **Fiery trial = partakers of Christ's sufferings** (this alone is one of those things that is one of the **highest privileges** a human can know)
  - Have you ever noticed how people who want to get a sun tan will lay out in the sun for hours...many times too many hours...and allow the sun to bake them to a crisp. But, notice that in August, the same person will complain when having to work out in the sun that it is too hot! What is that? It is all a matter of perspective. So it is with this that Peter describes.
  - **Gladness for us** is also an outcome
- ◆ **1Pet. 4:14** If ye be **reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye**; for **the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you**: on their part he is evil spoken of, but **on your part he is glorified**.
  - **Reproach for Christ** = happiness
  - **Another blessing**: spirit of glory and of God resting on us
  - **Final blessing**: Christ is glorified for your part in this experience of being reproached
    - At the time that Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, there were a number of prominent and supposedly informed scientists and national leaders who

said it was nothing more than a toy. Some said the very idea of a light bulb was a fairy tale. We ought to always remember how people can be absolutely ignorant about very important things, and how they can give us a hard time for following the unseen guidance of the Lord.

◆ **2Thess. 1:4** So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your **patience and faith in all** your persecutions and tribulations **that ye endure:**

- **The valid reason for troubles and trials given here** - To prove and build vigor into our patience and our faith.
  - Being human, we are pretty prone to quit before we finish the race, when the terrain gets particularly rough. We are inclined to “run out of patience” instead of running with patience the race that is set before us, and pressing toward the mark.
  - We’ve all seen some TV show where the person who has dragged himself across the desert or through the wilderness when lost, collapses on the side of a hill only to discover that rescue or safety is just over the brow of that hill. This is our experience concerning exercise of patience and faith sometimes.
  - Have you ever thought about how a marathon runner gets ready for an Olympic run? He keeps running and pushes for more endurance. The parallel for us is that we confront our trials with patience and faith in our Lord that this very behavior will pump up that patience and faith.

◆ **1Pet. 1:7** 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:

- Every challenge to the believer can be a trial of our faith. These trials are not random or without purpose, but in the Lord’s plan, the product is the really important thing
- Here, that product in two-fold – we are honored, we are praised, and we receive glory as a result...and so does our Savior.
  - Have you ever notice in national sports events, when the winning team is interviewed, the team members always praise the other team members and the coach as the ones who made the victory possible; then the coach praises the team members as the ones who made victory possible.

◆ **2Cor. 8:2** How that in a **great trial of affliction** the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty **abounded** unto the riches of their liberality.

- The key outcome of trials here is that it produces an overflowing (abounded) of things that represent the Lord’s way of doing things.
  - Do we remember that it was the wounds of our Savior that paid for our transgressions? “He was wounded for our transgressions, ...with His stripes we were healed” (Isa. 53:5)

- Have you ever thought about bread-making from the field to the table as being a great illustration of trials and outcomes. Grain beat out of the plant by some method; then ground to powder in a grist mill of some kind, then made into dough by being blended and kneaded, then cooked in a hot oven. End product, the “staff of life.”

II. Now, we want to look at the fact that there is peace and rest for believers, even in the presence of the trials we are ordained to suffer in this life.

◆ **Isa. 32:17** And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

- First, and most important, a condition of peace is given to us when we are saved. And relative to this, the **potential** to have peace and rest, generally, is formed in us as a result of that.
- **1Cor. 7:15** “...God hath called us to peace.”
- I think a great analogy to this truth is the potential in a car sitting in your driveway. There it sets, with oil and gas in the engine, but it does not go anywhere until the potential to travel is activated by someone turning the key and driving away.
- This does not contradict our Savior’s words where He said He came not to bring peace, but a sword.
- The reason it doesn’t was because He was talking about setting up a circumstance between God’s people and those who oppose the Lord in which there would be conflict (go read His statements in Mat. 10:34-37).
- But I am saying that for the Lord’s people **there is the potential** for a kind of personal peace that the opposition and enmity of the world, the tribulations and persecutions, and the troubles that come, cannot change or pollute.
- To understand why this is so, let me draw your attention to the special message our Savior gave us as His people in **John 14:27** “**Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.**”
  - First, our peace is an endowment from Christ (leave with you)
  - Second, it is HIS kind of peace (my peace) – divine, can’t be snatched away by powers in the world
  - Third, it is given specifically to calm us and eliminate fear (let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid)

- The Lord gives us some insight into the immutable nature of this peace in **Isa. 32:18** “And my people shall dwell in a **peaceable habitation**, and in **sure dwellings**, and in **quiet resting places**;”
  - First, the country of our citizenship is a peaceable place to live
  - Second, the houses we live in are secure refuges (see **2Cor. 5:1** “For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”)
  - Thirdly, we have quiet places to rest with our Lord and protector (“Come unto me, etc...rest”)