

Shadows Of Christ & His Bride

Lesson #14

Called To Suffer In The Journey

April 10, 2024

The Bible Is Clear: We Are Called To Suffer:

II Tim. 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Phil. 1:29 For you have been granted [the privilege] for Christ's sake,

not only to believe *and* confidently trust in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

I Peter 2:20-21 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. ²¹ For You Have Been Called For This Purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.

Psalms 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous
but the LORD will deliver him from them all.

Isa. 48:10 Behold, I have refined you, but not like silver:

I have purified you [chosen you] in the furnace of affliction.

Spurgeon: "He has not chosen us in the place of ease and tranquility of spirit, but in the furnace of affliction." The furnace of affliction becomes the proving ground of my Christian life and prepares me for service in His coming Millennial Kingdom.

I. The Furnace is DIVINELY APPOINTED

Spurgeon: These trials that come your way are not the mere product of caprice and chance. You are not the victim of empty and vexatious circumstance. You are a child of the King! You are the clay on the potter's wheel. The pressure may come.

- Afflictions are not the result of chance or blind fate.
- Afflictions are not to be traced to secondary causes.
- Afflictions are not merely the work of our enemies.
- Afflictions do not arise out of the dust [Job 5:6].
- Afflictions come by the wise and gracious arrangement of God's divine providence.

I Thess. 3:1-5 Therefore, when we could no longer endure *it*, we thought it best to be left behind, alone at Athens, ² and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen [establish] and encourage you for the benefit of your faith, ³ so that no one would be disturbed [shaken] by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we have been destined [appointed] for this. ⁴ For even when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction, and so it happened, as you know. ⁵ For this reason, when I could no longer endure *it*, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be for nothing.

The ancient Greek word translated shaken, came from the idea of a dog wagging its tail.

- Flattered, as a dog flattereth, by moving his tail
- To beguile through flattery or draw aside from the right path.
- Satan often flatters the believer in order to lead him astray.

In the parable of the soils, Jesus described the seed that withered under the heat of trials.

Matt. 13:19-21 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown *with seed* beside the road. And that sown on the rocky places, this is he who is hearing the word, and immediately with joy is receiving it, ²¹ and he hath not root in himself, but is temporary, and persecution or tribulation having happened because of the Word, immediately he is stumbled.

If the Thessalonians did waver in their faith, Paul would consider his work among them to have been in vain. If the Thessalonians withered, Paul's hard work as a farmer among them would have born no harvest. He sent Timothy to them, because those who are in affliction need the help of other godly people.

We must warn new believers that the way is not easy as they seek to live for Christ.

Otherwise, when trials come, these babes in Christ will be discouraged and defeated.

Consider: A person's faith can be real, a genuine trust in Christ, but it can become dormant and unfocused and fundamentally unfruitful because of carnality or failure to walk and grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

Key: Without a good understanding of the truth concerning the place of suffering in the life of the believer, we are in great danger of being shaken in our faith.

Key verse: I Thess. 3:8 because now we *really* live [in spite of everything],
if you stand firm [persevere] in the Lord. [Amplified]

Note: Every chapter in I Thessalonians ends with anticipation of
Jesus coming back and inaugurating a new heaven and a new earth.

Consider: All of God's children have been in the furnace of affliction!

1. Adam and Eve experienced it when they sinned and were expelled from the Garden of Eden.

- a. Two sons: Cain & Abel - One son lies as a lifeless corpse.
- b. Abel was in the furnace of his brother's enmity and persecution.

2. Time passes and where is the child of God?

a. You find Noah who is laughed at, hissed at, hooted as a fool,
a simpleton building a ship upon dry land, standing in the furnace of slander and laughter.

3. Time marches on: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; "these were God's tried people."

4. Where are God's people in Egypt? Look to the brick kilns of Egypt. In the furnace

5. Moses suffered with God's people in the furnace of the wilderness.

a. The fiery serpent hissed upon them; the sun scorched them.

6. Time passes to the time of King Saul? Where was the man after God's own heart?

a. He is in the caves of Engedi seeking refuge from his bloodthirsty enemies.

7. Where are God's children during the time of Ahab & Jezebel?
 - a. They are hidden by fifties in the cave and fed by bread and water.
8. Jeremiah and Isaiah were cruelly treated.
9. Daniel was put in the lions' den.
10. Apostles were persecuted and suffered cruel deaths.

Vance Havner: At the Nicene Council, an important church meeting in the 4th century A.D., of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith.

11. Close to 1 million Christians were murdered by different popes.

Spurgeon: "The march of the army of God may be tracked by their ashes left behind them. The church left behind it blazing fires of persecution and trouble. The path of the just is scarred on earth's breast. The monuments of the Church are the sepulchres of her martyrs. Earth has been ploughed with deep furrows wherever they have lived. You will not find the saints of God where you do not find the furnace burning round about them."

Consider: The wise man sees the hand of God in affliction as well as in affluence.

Every event is either: His appointment or it has His all-wise permission.

II. Why Does God Put His Children In The Furnace?

1. All Precious Things Have To Be Tried.

a. Gold must be tried; it cannot be used as it is dug up from the mine, or in grains as it is found in the rivers. It must pass through the crucible and the dross removed.

b. All things of any value must endure the fire.

Prov. 17:3 "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold."

If you were nothing but tin, there would be no need of the "refining-pot" for you;

- but it is simply because you are valuable that you must be tried.

2. The Christian Is To Be A Sacrifice To God. Romans 12:1

a. Every sacrifice must be burned with fire.

b. They killed the bullock and laid it on the altar, but it was no sacrifice till they burned it.

c. They slew the lamb, they laid the wood;

but there was no sacrifice in the killing of the lamb till it was burned.

d. If we never had the fire of trouble, if we never were kindled,

we should lie there without smoke, without flame, unacceptable to God.

But because you are His sacrifice, therefore you must be burned.

3. Without The Furnace We Would Not Be At All Like Jesus Christ.

a. Rev. 1:15: His feet were like glowing bronze refined in a furnace that "in all things He might be like unto his brethren.

Consider: If He walked through the flames, must we not do the same?

b. We look forward to being like Christ when He comes.

Question: Why do I fear to be like Him here? Will I not tread where my Savior trod?

Spurgeon: Onward, Christian! The captain of your salvation hath gone through the dark valley before you—therefore, onward! Onward with boldness! Onward with courage! Onward with hope! That you may be like your Savior and participate in His sufferings.

Spurgeon: Suffering comes before glory. The cross comes before the crown.

Rom. 8:17-18 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together. ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

➤ We do not focus on the suffering today; we focus on the glory tomorrow.

III. The Design of the Furnace is BENEFICIAL

1. It is for our everlasting good, and for His glory.

a. Designed to mature us and to fit us for His service now and eternally.

Robert Hall: We should be more anxious that our afflictions benefit us than that they should be speedily removed from us.

Richard Sibbes "The winter prepares the earth for the spring,
so do afflictions sanctified prepare the soul for glory."

Heb. 6:1 Therefore, leaving behind the elementary teachings about the Messiah, let us continue to be carried along to maturity,...

2. Prevent us from going astray

Ps. 119:67 "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word."

Ps. 119:71 "It is good for me that I have been afflicted — that I might learn Your statutes."

3. Afflictions wean us from the evil world.

Ps. 66:10-12 For you, God, tested us, to purify us like fine silver. You have led us into a trap and set burdens on our backs. ¹² You caused men to ride over us.

You brought us through fire and water, but you Led Us To Abundance.

a. When Egypt became an iron furnace — the Israelites became weary of it.

b. The prodigal thought of his father when he experienced famine.

c. The Lord makes this world a grief so we will never make it our paradise.

4. Afflictions Test Our Religious Profession.

We profess to be *soldiers* in the army of the King of kings. We claim to fight under the banner of the Lord Almighty. Therefore, the Lord allows us to be attacked by *Satan* and assaulted by the *world* with afflictions and persecutions — to try us. Cowards will yield early in the fight.

Real soldiers will stand and fight to the death, but a traitor will join with the enemy.

II Tim. 2:3 You therefore endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

5. The Furnace Is Necessary to Stir Us To Prayer

Isa. 26:16 LORD, they came to you in distress; they poured out their secret prayer when your chastenings were afflicting them."

6. Jesus Is With Me In The Furnace of Affliction

a. Jesus comes to the desolate places to be with us.

Isa. 41:10 Don't be afraid, because I'm with you; don't be anxious, because I am your God. I keep on strengthening you; I'm truly helping you. I'm surely upholding you with my victorious right hand.

Isa. 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I'll be with you; and through the rivers, they won't sweep over you. when you walk through fire you won't be scorched, and the flame won't set you ablaze.

Heb. 12:10-11 Affliction is "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, for those who have been trained by it, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace.

7. Afflictions Prepare Us For Greater Usefulness & Fruitfulness.

This act flows from both the justice and compassion of God.

John 15:2 "Every branch that bears fruit, He *prunes* it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

Spurgeon: The *right hand of His mercy*, knows what the *left hand of His severity* is doing!

Deut. 4:20 For the LORD took you and brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace—out of Egypt—To Be The People Of His Inheritance, as you are today.

Presently, the Lord is fashioning my inward spiritual life for crowns and thrones in His coming Kingdom. The oppression, the piercings, the anguish, the disappointments, and all events — are but the preparation for the position we shall occupy in His Kingdom and the world to come.

Consider: When God's grace enables us to see the hand of God in all events, we can bear these without murmuring or complaining.

a. Job lost his family, his wealth, and his good health, yet he consoled himself:

Job 23:10, 14 But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

¹⁴For He performs [will complete] what is appointed for me, He has many things in mind for me!

b. David suffered much from his enemies and his family, yet he said:

Ps. 31:15 "My times are in Your hand!"

Ps. 39:9 "I remain silent; I do not open my mouth for You are the one who acted!"

c. When Eli was told his family tree would be cut off, he said to Samuel:

I Sam. 3:18 "He is the LORD; let Him do what is good in His eyes!"

d. When Hezekiah was told by the Prophet Isaiah that his sons would be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon, he said:

Isa. 39:8 "The word of the LORD you have spoken is good."

When we find ourselves in a very dark chapter of the book of Divine Providence, rest upon the words of our Lord:

John 13:7 "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand!"

Our Daily Bread: A man, in a time of business recession, lost his job, a sizable fortune, and his beautiful home. To add to his sorrow, his precious wife died; yet he tenaciously held to his faith -the only thing he had left. One day while out walking in search of employment, he stopped to watch some men who were doing stonework on a large church. One of them was chiseling a triangular piece of rock. 'Where are you going to put that?' he asked. The workman said, 'Do you see that little opening up there near the spire? I'm shaping this stone down here so it will fit in up there.' Tears filled his eyes as he walked away, for the Lord had spoken to him through that laborer whose words gave new meaning to his troubled situation.

This is the testing time, but it is also the CHOOSING TIME, for God chooses His workers and fits them for higher ministry in the times and in the places of distress and difficulty.

The Psalmist speaks: "Thou didst enlarge me when I was in distress."

This is the testimony you will hear repeatedly as you find out what preceded ministries that are effective for the glory of God.

GOD ENLARGED ME WHEN I WAS IN DISTRESS.

Spurgeon: God is looking for individuals who will step into places of ministry and effective testimony. To fit His workers properly, He often must plunge them into the fires.

"The Lord gets his best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction."

Question: How will you handle afflictions in your life?

My human flesh cries out against it. However, if I am serious about a deeper and closer walk with the Lord, suffering is part of the process.

He casts us in the fires of trial to Refine Us and Conform Us to the image of Jesus Christ.

Truth: Scripture says we will suffer in this life. The challenge is to Suffer Well.

Remedy: God gives us the GRACE to submit. His Grace enables us to endure.

II Cor. 12:9-10 My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities,
that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

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.

- Every weakness in me is an opportunity for God to show His strength in my life.
- Continuous process: My strength is being made perfect.
- We receive many of our blessings by transformation. He may not remove the affliction, but He gives us His grace, so the affliction works for us and not against us.
- His thorn was a gift! Accept it and allow God to accomplish His purposes.
- We do not live on explanations; we are to live on promises. [Warren Wiersbe]
- Promises generate faith which strengthens hope. [Wiersbe]

It takes a spirit-filled Christian to submit and let God fight his battles.
We lead by serving. We serve by suffering. This suffering ALWAYS leads to glory.

I Pet. 4:12-16 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial [refining process] which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

- Happened = To Go Together > Persecution & trials do not just "happen."

They are a part of God's plan, and He is in control.

but Rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached [insulted] for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶ Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in this matter.

- Rejoice = be constantly rejoicing > Why?

Our suffering means fellowship with Christ. It is an honor and a privilege.

Acts 5:41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Turning Trials Into Triumphs: Transforming Me Into Image Of Christ

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall [encounter, come across] into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

- Count = Look at it from a different mindset; evaluate

Consider: Various trials come to test our faith which produces endurance and perseverance.

Result: I am being transformed and growing more in spiritual maturity.

Rom. 5:3-4 We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that

suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

- God afflicts us with severe trials so these graces will be produced in us; otherwise, they would lie dormant with us.

Sequence = Tribulation > Patience > Proven Character > Hope

Victory in this present life is closely associated with occupation and orientation to the weightier things of eternity and the glories which shall follow.

II Cor. 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Be Faithful Until Death - even to the point of martyrdom.

Rev. 2:8-11 Do Not Fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be Faithful Until Death, and I will give you the crown of life.

The promise: "I will give you the Crown Of Life." It is not eternal life. Eternal life is a gift through faith or personal belief in Jesus Christ [John 1:11-12; 3:16; I John 5:11-12].

The Crown Of Life is a special reward for endurance under persecution.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been APPROVED, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Note: This approval will take place when we as believers stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. He will evaluate us for all the works that we have done on this earth.

Heb. 10:35-37 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. ³⁶ For ye have need of patience [endurance], that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

³⁷For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Job 23:10-11 But He knows the way that I take;

When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. [Promise, reckon, yield, thank]

¹¹My foot has held on to His path; I have kept His way and not turned aside.

Our suffering means glory in the future. I Am Being Prepared For Life & Service In Glory
I Pet. 1:6 You greatly Rejoice In This,

even though you have to suffer various kinds of trials for a little while,

A. If Need Be = Some for discipline; some for spiritual growth

B. Various Trials = God matches the trial to our strengths and needs. Do not think because you overcame one kind of trial you will automatically overcome them all.

C. Trials produce heaviness > experience grief or pain

D. They are "for a season." When God permits us to go through the furnace,

He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat.

E. If I rebel, He may have to reset the clock,

but if I submit, He will not permit me to suffer too long.

F. Learn the lesson and bring glory to Him alone.

The Lord keeps me in the furnace until I reflect the glory and beauty of Jesus Christ.

G. This glory is not fully revealed until Jesus returns for His church.

My trying experiences today are preparing me for glory tomorrow. Rejoice as I look ahead.

God is training me for future ministry in His Kingdom.

Quote: Do not become discouraged with your circumstances.

These are the very tools God uses to make you more like Jesus Christ.

If suffering today means glory tomorrow and for eternity, then suffering becomes a blessing.

Rejoice in This?

I Pet. 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

I Pet. 1:6-9 You greatly Rejoice In This, even though you have to suffer various kinds of trials for a little while, These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the End Result Of Your Faith, the Salvation Of Your Souls.

I Peter 4:19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. [He meets the needs of His people].

Note: Commit = deposit for safekeeping = Be constantly committing

I Peter 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

Acts 20:32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.