

Longsuffering With Joyfulness

The Road To Victory

If there is anything of all God's requirements that seems to stir up rebellion in the heart of His redeemed ones, it is \neg Yet, here we find it as number four in His description of what He expects to see blossoming in the lives of His children as a result of the indwelling of His precious Holy Spirit. "*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering...*"

We all want love, joy and peace, but who on earth truly wants to suffer? Yet, the Word of God is clear that "*IF so be we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him...*" (Rom. 8:17), and, "*IF any man will come after Me, let him deny himself take up his cross daily and follow Me*" (Luke 9:23).

No suffering - no reigning! No cross - no crown! No obstacles - no overcoming! Our spiritual muscles become soft and flabby when we go long periods with everything running smoothly. It's doing battle with the forces of the enemy of our souls that develops strong, vibrant, fruit-bearing Christians.

Yet, we run away from suffering as if it were the plague. Whether it is spiritual suffering or physical, our first thought is usually how to make it go away, rather than, "What blessing is my faithful Lord trying to work out in me through this experience? What is He trying to teach me here? Just how is my wonderful Savior going to work this together for good to me, whom He loves, and to others?"

This writer has been walking with the Lord Jesus for many years and has experienced wonderful deliverances from all sorts of troubles and problems as God has gloriously worked them out in answer to prayer. Yet I humbly admit that the instinct is still so strong to run for a "pill" or other man-made way to escape the suffering that comes my way, that I still find myself in situations where I must ask His forgiveness for not taking it to Him in the first place...not just for "escape" but for the blessings of His disciplines to be worked out through me. Oh, if we could only realize how much more quickly we find relief from the sufferings He so wisely permits, when we take His way out instead of seeking a shortcut!

We are taught in the New Testament that God will not allow us to be tested above that which we are able, but with every temptation, He will provide a way of escape, and that He always works all things together for good to them whom He loves and who are called according to His purpose. Yes, Romans 8:28 has been a great comfort to God's people down through the centuries, but we often forget to look at the next verse, in which He tells us that He is in the process of "conforming us to the image of His Son." And the Word teaches us that even Jesus was made perfect through these experiences; He had been enabled to be "*strong in the Lord, and in the power of HIS might,*" and that while "*no chastening for the present seems joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby*" (Heb. 12:11). Then in the next verse we are encouraged to "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees". In other words, stop fretting and looking at the dark side of things and begin thanking and praising Him Who works all things together for good.

"*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*" is the promise of our wonderful Lord. How? "*Take on the whole armor of God!*" Begin living in Ephesians 6:10-18 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-6. Let all forms of doubt, fear, worry, fretting, and everything else that remotely resembles a rebellious spirit be dealt with for what they are - SIN. Confess them as you would any other sin and He promises you immediate forgiveness and restoration to His glorious fellowship.

God demands much of us, but praise His precious Name, He stands ready to supply every single thing He demands, as we surrender to His wonderful indwelling Holy Spirit and turn the job over to Him.

Paul said "I die daily" and that is the process. We must die out to our own inclinations to get victory through willpower or man-made formulas. Daily surrendering the job to Him; yes, moment by moment surrendering everything to Him. Remember that Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing:" Let us abandon the worldly philosophy once and for all that God is Someone to call on just in emergencies, and that we should not bother Him often, but do our best to blunder through on our own!

Thank God He is always ready and eager to take our surrendered minds and bodies and live a beautiful and victorious life through us. Every surrender (as He shows us areas of our life in which He has not had full control) permits Him to fill us more completely with Himself and do a better job of living the Christian life through us. Each victory He wins in us brings us joyous relief from the tension that comes through trying to do the job ourselves (or with His "help"). And after every victory comes still sweeter fellowship with Him. This is the life of the overcomer (1 John 4:4) and overcomers are the ones God is preparing for that very special place with Him. "*He that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne*" (Rev. 3:21).

How about you? Is God going to get the opportunity for which His great heart longs in your life?

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