

## Liberty Commentary June 23, 2008

The question often arises, if God loves me why am I suffering. Suffering can present itself in many different ways. It can be in the form of financial hardships, a health crisis, a marital crisis and strained friendships. It is only natural to ask ourselves, why?

The apostle Paul was no stranger to suffering. Paul writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Romans chapter five, “but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience”. Paul’s theme is on to maturity. Paul is assuring us (those who have received Christ as their Savior) that God will ultimately work all things out for our good and His glory, as we trust Him.

Tribulation is something all of us have experienced at some point in our lives, but we do not like to talk about it because of the indelible mark of suffering it has made in our lives. The word tribulation comes from the Latin word tribulum. A tribulum is a heavy timber with spikes. The heavy tribulum was used in ancient times to separate the grain from the chaff.

There are times when it seems as though our lives are being crushed by the tribulum of problems. As the weight of the tribulum presses down upon us we would say this is harsh, it is burdensome, this problem is crushing me, why is God punishing me.

God would have to respond; I am not punishing you, I am purifying you. I am separating the chaff out of your life because I have a great task for you to do and you cannot accomplish my will as long as the chaff of the sin nature encumbers you. Everything that hinders our relationship with Christ must be removed and it may be a bit painful and a bit uncomfortable, but in the end it will be for the best.

Paul says we can glory in tribulation because it brings patience. We

all need patience to wait upon the Lord while enduring the tribulations of life, but we can be confident that the tribulum that God allows to press us down and purify our lives will produce the fruit of patience.

Sometimes we are like the man who struggled with the lack of patience. He prayed, Lord, my wife says I am impatient, my boss says I am impatient, my family all say I am impatient, Lord give me patience and give it to me right now.

Paul says patience can only come from being put under the weight of the tribulum. There are no short cuts.

Paul goes on to tell us in Romans five that tribulation worketh patience and patience experience. One of the results of suffering is that it makes us experienced in the trials of life. We sort of build up spiritual antibodies to keep us strong for the challenges that lie ahead.

The bottom line in what Paul is saying is that the more experience we have in suffering the more we are able to help others when they suffer. The more suffering we experience the more experience we achieve and the more we are able to sympathize and empathize with others who are going through tribulations.

Paul continues by saying that patience and experience produces hope.

We have hope because of two things. 1) Hope concerns the future. We may regret the past but hope is always based on the future. We may have made mistakes in the past, but we have hope for a better day as we walk in union and communion with Christ in a new life with him. 2) Hope concerns something good in the future. In the future I know that my body will continue to deteriorate and die, but I do have hope that something good in the future will take place

because I will get a glorified, perfect, heavenly body one day.

There are two definitions of hope. One is the verb kind of hope that is exhibited when you ask someone if they are going to heaven when they die and they say, "I hope so". They have no assurance, only hope against hope that they will somehow make it in. The other kind of hope is the noun kind of hope that is exhibited by the Christian who has assurance of their salvation based on Gods Word and they know that God will bring it to pass because they have trusted Christ by faith and know unequivocally that they have a home waiting in heaven.

Because of the noun kind of hope that every true believer possesses, we can have assurance of knowing that whatever tribulation God allows into our lives it will produce patience, experience, and hope because we know based upon the authority of Gods Word that God will never lead us where His grace will not sustain us.

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