

**Grace Bible Church
Tree of Life
A Weekly Review
Week ending 060913
Being a soldier for the Word of God. Part 11.**

Last time I spoke we established the fact that when it comes to spiritual warfare and the art of war that the Christian soldier does not lead a normal life. Remember the very important words of the apostle Paul who said:

2Ti 2:1-4, You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

The ministry that all of us are called to is not a normal life. What we really need to note is the Divine perspective and the positive outlook of the believer in time of suffering. How the curse can be turned into a blessing. Affliction into prosperity. Disaster into success. Tragedy into mastery. Catastrophe into devotion. The divine perspective and the positive outlook of the believer responding to that perspective will totally change the personal suffering the believer goes through. Notice that I said that your mental attitude will totally change the personal suffering although the suffering itself may not change at all.

Adversity plays a major role in our life and that is because suffering is like a parent. Suffering saps our human resources and confronts us with our total dependence upon the grace of God. And that's a good thing, that's a positive thing. Grace is a good thing, God's power is a powerful thing.

This is why Paul could say in that graceful and powerful verse **2Co 12:9-10 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**

If you have the divine perspective resulting in the positive outlook in time of suffering you will recognize your need for God. Pain and suffering not only discourages us from going in the wrong direction, but it can also help to drive us in the right direction.

Psa 119:50, This is my comfort in my affliction, That Thy word has revived me.

PS + DP + PRB = R of BD

Personal Suffering + Divine Perspective + Positive Response of the Believer = Revival of Doctrine.

The result is something so short, yet, so rich. Suffering is designed for our good and for God's glorification: He is glorified by sustaining and blessing us in any situation, whether prosperity or adversity. It is for His own glory, and that's why in the midst of hardships and disasters of life God promises, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." (Jos 1:5; Heb 13:5).

Psa 55:22, Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

Rather than eliminating suffering from our lives, He gives us far greater benefits by walking with us even “through the valley of the shadow of death.” (Psa 23:4).

We have studied many times the principle that as we grow spiritually, every stage of spiritual growth is accompanied by some form of suffering. These categories of suffering are reserved for spiritual adults:

1. Providential Preventive Suffering keeps the believer from distorting his new found spiritual self-esteem into arrogance. And in the wisdom of God when you pass this test it motivates the first stage of spiritual self-esteem into the second stage spiritual autonomy or independence. This is when Gal 4:19 is fulfilled, My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you. The key word is the word “formed” in you.
2. The second test is what we call momentum testing (call it what you want) accelerates the believer’s spiritual advance, carrying him from spiritual autonomy or spiritual independence into spiritual maturity. This is fulfilled in passages like **Eph 3:17, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love,**
3. Then the third test is what we call Evidence Testing which demonstrates the efficacy of God’s grace in the life of the spiritually mature believer and culminates in maximum glorification of God. Fulfilled in such passages as **Phi 1:20-21, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**

These three categories of undeserved suffering are specialized provisions of God's grace. Their purpose is the continued spiritual growth of a believer who has faithfully adhered to the divine protocol or the PPOG. Sadly, in any generation relatively few Christians obey the divine mandates and utilize His marvelous grace assets.

Few ever reach spiritual adulthood. Easily distracted from their true destiny as members of the royal family of God, most believers lack the positive volition, the humility, the consistency to stick with the PPOG. Not many believers will ever face suffering for blessing. Hardly any will enjoy the benefits of experiencing God’s grace in action under extreme duress. If you have not learned a great deal of Bible doctrine, you have no right to assume that the pressures in your life are suffering for blessing.

If, however, you have inculcated your soul with God’s thinking, you can anticipate a challenging, stimulating life of special grace from God in adversity and in prosperity. For some strange reason, most believers seem to forget.

Isa 55:8, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord.

We always seem to think that suffering is something that's negative rather than a promotion of something that is positive. We should be looking upon it from the divine perspective and the positive outlook of the believer found in passages such as **2Co 4:17, that this momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,**

Why?

2Co 4:18, Because we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

This suffering can occur while you are *on your way* to a certain stage of spiritual growth and *when you arrive* at a certain stage.

The divine perspective and the positive outlook of the believer in time of suffering is **Rom 8:18, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

Therefore, if this suffering can occur while you're on your way to a certain stage of spiritual growth and when you arrive at a certain stage, then; why would you look at it in anyway but positive? This makes sense for us concerning a lot of passages such as Act 5:41, when the early church was going through the beginning of persecution.

Act 5:41, So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

So therefore, if this suffering can occur while you're on your way to a certain stage of spiritual growth and when you arrive at a certain stage, then; Why would you look at it in anyway but positive? Each stage of spiritual growth contains divine assets that may be used to solve particular problems that cause or accompany the suffering. These assets are designed for the believer to learn ultimately what it means to go it alone with God. In fact, we all need to have that experience of going through struggles in life alone with God. This is a part of becoming spiritually self-sustained.

2Ch 32:31, God left Hezekiah "Alone to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart."

Joh 8:9, it wasn't until the woman caught in adultery was left alone with the Lord that she was set free.

The Lord even had to go through this in **Joh 16:32, "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."**

To be left alone with God is the only true way of arriving at an accurate knowledge of ourselves and our ways. And no matter what we may think about ourselves, or what others may think about us. The real question is what does God think about us? The answer to this question can only be learned when we are left alone with Him. By that I mean examining our own lives in light of Bible doctrine.

This is one of the things that David said in PSA 26:2 Examine me, O Lord, and try me; Test my mind and my heart.

Jer 12:3 But Thou knowest me, O Lord; Thou seest me; And Thou dost examine my heart's attitude toward Thee.

2Co 13:5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!

When a believer objectively examines his own life according to doctrine, he is alone with God and he begins to see the divine perspective and develops a positive outlook in time of suffering.

To develop the divine perspective and a positive outlook in time of suffering, we all need to have that experience of going through struggles in life alone with God.

And when a believer has the divine perspective and a positive outlook in time of suffering the principle is that there are times that we are apparently unsuccessful but in reality we are really most successful. It's just that according to the world, it looks like we have been defeated when in reality we have been promoted. The point is that we may *not* obtain the very thing we seek after at the time, but the *spiritual strength* we acquire in the effort may be infinitely more important than the thing itself.

The Gideon syndrome. What is the Gideon syndrome?

Rom 15:4, For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

1Co 10:11, Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Suffering has been designed by God to cause us to obtain the very *spiritual strength* we need not the very thing we seek after. The spiritual strength we acquire through suffering, especially in undeserved suffering is one truly brings glory to God.

How important is understanding the divine perspective and the positive outlook of the believer in time of suffering? It is extremely important for when the apostle Paul speaks of what has been graciously given to us for our own benefit, he speaks of two things:

1. Salvation
2. Suffering

Phi 1:29, For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

We don't have the time in the short time we have together to exegete each word so we will just note the key words to this passage in Phi 1:29 For to you it has been granted. The key word here is the verb translated *has been granted*, which is the aor-pass-ind from *charizomai* which means to be graciously given, to give without strings, to give freely as a favor from God.

The constantive aorist tense here gathers into one entirety the action of the verb, meaning the Philippians Church is filled with believers who have reached that point of time where they are ready for the ultimate goal of the spiritual life. It is the passive voice that I want you to be occupied with because it says that the believers receive the action of the verb. And the indicative mood is declarative for an absolute fact that these people are under these conditions because of their spiritual growth.

Phi 1:29, For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him

to believe in him is the pres-act-inf of *pisteuo* which is *pisteuein* which is a reference to salvation and it is correctly translated.

Phi 1:29, Because to you it has been graciously given with reference concerning Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also

but also is the Greek phrase *alla kai*, a very strong adversative conjunction setting up a contrast between being saved and going all the way to spiritual maturity.

And then we have the phrase *to suffer for His sake* which is *huper autou* and then the pres-act-inf of *pascho* which is *paschein* referring to suffering, basically suffering for blessing. It means to endure evil, to have tribulation, to bear or endure suffering and hardship. You will never reach spiritual maturity unless you face a certain amount of undeserved suffering and don't complain about it. It means when you are in no man's land spiritually, all alone with God, you're going to have pressures and undeserved suffering. This is the suffering that gives you that final thrust to reach God's goal for you life.

God's goal for your life - to give you His highest and best.

God's goal for your life - Glorify Him in the Angelic Conflict.

God's goal for your life - Grow in His grace and knowledge.

God's goal for your life - To be able to say to you, **Mat 25:21, Well done, good and faithful servant.**

The divine perspective and the positive outlook of the believer in time of suffering is to break down the cleverness and strength and self-confidence and self-sufficiency that most of us use to overcome others. When we see suffering from the divine perspective and develop a positive outlook toward that suffering, we see God breaking our human strength and smashing our human wisdom in order to bestow upon us His divine strength and divine wisdom.

For many believers, there are times when God intervenes between *us* and our *greatly desired goals* which we have been seeking to attain and counting upon as we place all of our human efforts into it. In fact, the expectation of accomplishing these goals or possessions have determined our decisions and even shaped our life in a dramatic way. In some cases, it even seems as if God has been encouraging us to achieve these goals.

Many times the reason is that God wishes us to be in such a state of mind that we shall receive everything that we need as His gift so that it becomes ours totally by the power and the grace of God.

So that **1Co 1:29, that no man should boast before God.**