

In SPIRIT and TRUTH

Have You Felt Like Giving Up Lately?

Have you become weary in well-doing, and tired of fighting the good fight of faith? Well, “think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you”... but rejoice, for this too is the will of God concerning you!



“Suffering Servants, STAND!”

As New Covenant, born again descendants of Abraham, most of us gladly acknowledge God’s promises to Abraham concerning health, prosperity, and salvation; we are part of the “name it”, “claim it”, and “expect God to perform it” generation. However, did you know that suffering, persecution, and tribulation are also *promised* to the children of God? 2 Timothy 3:12 declares, “*all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*”. Jesus said, in John 15:20, that “the servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you”. And in Acts 14:22, we are told that “*we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*”.

But as Christians living in the U.S. in today’s modern society, are we really suffering persecution? I know that we sometimes suffer humiliation from unsaved friends and family, because we choose to live for Christ. And others may be victims of discrimination on the job or in society, because of their religious convictions. But I believe that the persecution that Jesus spoke of was that which was experienced by the early church; He said it would be even greater for those confessing Christ at the end of the ages, during the time of “great tribulation”, spoken of in the Book of Revelation.

However, in light of all the bizarre world events that have taken place in 2020, and even early on this new year, one thing that even nominal believers seem to agree upon is that we are probably living in “the last days”, a prelude to the tribulation. Jesus called it “the beginning of sorrows”, and said that it would be characterized by rampant deception, wars, rumors of wars, nations rising up against nations, kingdoms against kingdoms, famines, **pestilence** (Coronavirus pandemic), and earthquakes.

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Recent data on the psychological effects of all that has happened in 2020 related to the **Coronavirus**, reveals that many are suffering from overwhelming stress related to isolation, loneliness, worry, loss of love ones, finances, and job insecurity. Others have experienced great fear due to health issues, sometimes resulting in difficulty sleeping and various mental health issues, with suicide on the rise.

However, for those who put their trust in God, we should not fear; because the Word of God clearly states that if we are in Christ, we should expect to suffer. These present-day trials and hard times are God's way of preparing His church for the greater end time tribulations to come (see Matthew 24). Our attitudes towards suffering *now* will determine whether we will be able to "*endure to the end*".



Some may ask, *why suffering?* **Suffering is God's way of making us one with Him. Simply put, we suffer because He suffered.** Romans 8:15-18 explains how we become the children of God by the spirit of adoption; then we become joint-heirs with Christ if we suffer with Him. And what a blessing to know that the God for whom we suffer is also "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who



The Lord sends suffering so we can receive His consolation.

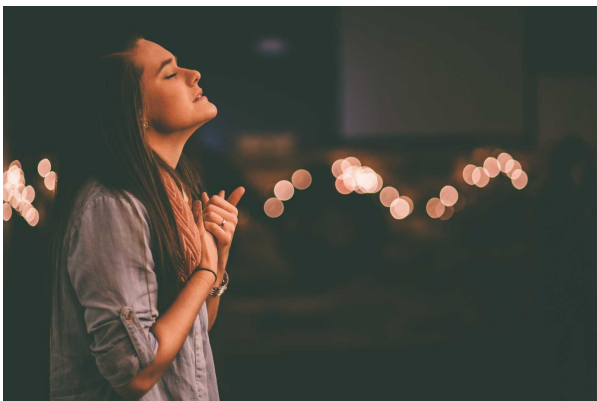
comforts us in ALL our tribulation" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)! The Lord gives us His consolation in our times of suffering, so we can be confident, knowing that He is with us. This is when we truly come to know Him as "the Comforter". As we learn of God's faithfulness in our times of sorrow, we can then encourage and comfort others who also suffer. Thus, we become not only partakers of His suffering, but also of the consolation which we receive of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1:7).

Finally, there is yet another purpose for the trials and tribulations we experience in this life. **It is to build our faith.** Even though the early church suffered greatly, they continued to grow strong in faith... Acts 4:13-21; 5:17-42.



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“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Galatians 6:9



Sometimes the trials we experience may seem to be more than we can bear; and despite all that we try to do, things sometimes get worse, with seemingly no way out. In times like this, the natural tendencies of the flesh would be to give up, get angry, get even, or to decide to establish our own ways for deliverance. But as children of God, we must not forget *whose* we are, and who the real enemy is in this life.

2 Corinthians 10:4 reminds us that ***“the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of (spiritual) strongholds”***. Therefore, when we find ourselves in the midst of great trials, we must continue to fight *spiritually* and not become “weary in well-doing” (2 Thessalonians 3:13). For if we cease to trust God and His Word, we give place to the devil, allowing him to “come in like a flood”, making matters worse! If we do not want the enemy to get the victory, we must look to the Lord for the strength we need to persevere in faith.

As we learn to endure these times of light affliction *with the right attitudes*, our faith will increase; then when we begin to experience greater tribulation, we should not doubt. For we should be *assured* that the Lord is more than able to deliver us out of *any* circumstance.

So, how do we remain steadfast to endure till the end? We must first establish in our hearts that *the Word of God is our only source of truth!* Then we must seek to know Him for ourselves, and come in covenant with Him, according to truth (John 3:3-7; Acts 2:38-39). So even if we suffer, we know that we remain in His will. For as it is written, ***“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2 Timothy 2:12).***

Finally (and probably most difficult) we must maintain our joy and learn to praise God in the midst of the trials! Nehemiah 8:10 declares, “...the joy of the Lord is your strength!”

Did you know that there can be deliverance in praise?!



In Acts 16:19-26, Paul and Silas were delivered from prison as “they prayed, and sang praises unto God”. Praise endues us with power from on high when we use the name of JESUS. The Lord concludes the matter in Psalms 50:15...

“Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me”.