

“We must go through much tribulation to enter the kingdom of God.”

By Nick Bibile

Ac 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

It is the office of the ministers, not only to teach, but also to confirm those that are taught, and prepare them for the cross. (Geneva Bible Commentary)

We know that Paul was a persecuter of the church and a murderer. He deserved nothing but hell. When his free will was taking him directly to hell, God interfered and saved Paul and Paul was saved by grace alone. We too fall into the same category, we too were on the way to hell, as our free will is to sin against the Lord, then one day God regenerated us and saved us by grace alone. Now we are soldier for Christ. A soldier does not creep into a corner and live idly, if he does the enemy will kill him. Soldiers life is not a comfortable life as they have to adopt to all situations because they are in a war.

Here we see how Paul and Barnabas returning to the churches which they have taught before. Why did they return? The word of God is not only instructions to the believer but also confirmation of their faith. The word confirm here is to strengthen and establish. Those that are converted need to be confirmed in their faith. They will go through hardships and trials in Christ. Whatever planted need to be rooted. The goal of the pastors is to awaken the sinners and to establish them to hold strongly to the faith. Paul and Barnabas returned on this in mind.

They exhorted them to continue in the faith. The word exhort means to encourage, advise, and to warn. Paul said, that we must go through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. It means the Christian must go through much affliction, much anguish, much trouble, much hardship, much burden, much pressure to enter to the kingdom of God. This was their advise to the church.

How many kinds of afflictions are there? There are two kinds of afflictions. 1. Eternal. 2. Temporal. The eternal is for the wicked, for the disobedient, the torments of body and soul. This is an everlasting torment in hell, in the lake of fire, unquenchable fire, it is like a worm that dieth not, everlasting death as the torments will be everlasting, they experience dying, always dying, but never be dead, always to die and never to be dead. The scriptures say, “Their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.” (Mark 9:46-48) What is the reason for this punishment? Or is it necessary for this kind of punishment? Yes, the reason is that they have committed sin against God who is infinitely good, and he

demands an infinite punishment and satisfaction, God's justice have to be satisfied.

All the others are temporal afflictions. There are temporal afflictions for the godly and ungodly, as even the ungodly experience afflictions of sickness, poverty, wars and other miseries of life. In reference to our subject when Paul said, "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." He is referring to the afflictions where the godly will endure on carrying the cross. I personally see there are four kinds of afflictions for the godly on carrying the cross.

Mr 8:34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

1. The discipline that God put upon the believers for their sins, as father corrects his son with gentleness and patience. These are fatherly chastisements. When we sin God will be displeased with the sin we have committed and on this life he will chastise us like a father chastising his children. (Hebrews 12: 5-11) King David was afflicted by his sin of adultery and he repented and turned to God.
2. Carrying the cross will develop faith, hope and patience. These trials will mature the saint and will prove and confirm their journey as they are surely taking the narrow road that leads to life. James said, "My brethren, count it joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." (James 1:2-3) When the Christians were hunted and put to death by Nero, Peter said, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you, 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." (1 Pet 4:12-13)
3. The next form of the cross is martyrdom. This includes the testimony and the witness of the godly concerning the true gospel, when they confirm and seal with their blood the doctrine they have believed and trusted when they are brought to the earthly judgments they will face humiliation and punishment and death, but they will hold to what they have believed until death.

The true Christian lives a self denial lifestyle as we are invited to pick up the cross and follow on the narrow road. The missionaries who leave their comforts here and go to another country lives a self denial lifestyle. I am not talking of some who go as missionaries and live very elegantly with the dollar value in a poor country and do missionary work, this kind of missionary is trying to please both ends, pleasing God and at the same time pleasing the flesh. The true missionary will live among the poor and set an example of his doctrine. I remember the other day when I happen to cut the grass out of my weed whacker and I knew it was going to take me a long time and but brother Art and his family made a surprise visit with their lawn mower and all the other equipments and they helped me, within a short time we were done. They came as they are concerned this is their church. I am sure they had other things to do, but it was a self denial. I see brother Tony, Robert and sister Laurel putting a lot of effort to the church, as during the week after work they are here, they can do all kinds of things at home, but they deny their self and are concern of the ministry in the church. When they went to San Quintine Mexico driving about 6-7 hours to give the booklets to the poor Mexican pastor in a poverty stricken village, they could have spent this three day labor day holiday pleasing their flesh, but they denied themselves and went to the interior of Mexico not even knowing what will happen to them, they could not speak Spanish as Art and Carlos who speak Spanish could not come as they were working. Jesus said, "whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." Christianity is not only on Sundays but a lifestyle. How many of you witness to people on other days too, give tracts. Oh! The exceedingly marvelous gospel we unworthy sinners have received, how much more joyous we should be in giving this treasure to the others, by doing that we know we will be go through hardships. It is much tempting to watch TV and enjoy our flesh then come to church on Sundays, do our rituals and go home. Do you suffer for Christ and the gospel? Do you deny your self for Christ who was mocked and crucified and put to death? Or is it only a religion outwardly and not in the heart? Have you sat down and count the cost of following Christ? It is going to cost your flesh, your other fleshly desires, your money, wealth, your family and friends. You will be tempted by the devil to take the broad road which is very tempting and pleasing to the flesh and for your advantage. On the other hand you look and count the cost and see by taking the narrow road you will not profit anything, it is a bad bargain, it is disadvantage to you, you will not gain anything. But Jesus asked this question, " For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

" If we desire to end our days in joy and comfort, let us lay the foundation of a comfortable death now betimes. To die well is not a thing of that light moment as some imagine: it is no easy matter. But to die well is a matter of every day. Let us daily do some good that may help us at the time of our death. Every day by repentance pull out the sting of some sin, that so when death comes, we may have nothing to do but to die. To die well is the action of the whole life "

RICHARD SIBBES

" Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst; he promises honour, and pays with disgrace; he promises pleasure, and pays with pain; he promises profit, and pays with loss; he promises life, and pays with death. But God pays as he promises; all his payments are made in pure gold " THOMAS BROOKS

Let me ask you a question from those who could not go. How many prayed for them yesterday? How many were meditating in prayer for them and interceding for them? And how many were enjoying themselves in pleasing the flesh forgetting them? How many came here to help them? They had to leave and Laurel even cooked breakfast for everyone. How many came to clean the kitchen? This is your church. It is easy for us all to gather on Sunday, but the church is not only on Sundays but we are here everyday. When there are missionary works and events like this we need to all participate. I want to thank the children as they helped a lot in the house with Laurel and Sheryl for welcoming Robert Elliot and family. When I was in the Philippines ministering to our poor church in Cebu, Jocelyn and the others come almost daily to where we live, and if there is any work they will help us. Every Saturday they are busy in preparation for Sunday. They clean the church, the garden and we were a big family working together for the Lord. As a Pastor my job is to study and to give you strong doctrine and it is not easy to do that. If you think it is easy try doing it every Sunday.

There are some who serve the Lord in the flesh and not in the spirit. They are like the JW's on the street. Have you seen the JW's walking on the street, what are they talking? All fleshly things and not spiritual as they are not saved. There are many who will go witnessing and when they travel they will be talking all fleshly things that gratify their flesh, they are not even going in their spirit. For them it is only a duty to the Lord. The Lord does not need your duty what the Lord need is true service to him in love. Have you notice when you talk something worldly or something that is pleasing to the flesh others get excited but when talking about the Lord they are very silent.

2Ti 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Ac 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

There is an inward unity among the true Christians and this unity is knitted together in the love of our Lord in their hearts and souls. This inward unity will bring external love and affection to one another and again we see it is a self denial realizing I do not owe my things as I need to share with the needy in the church not grudgingly but in a willing heart I want to share what the Lord have given me with the others.

Lastly there are so many who know that only a few will be saved as they know that they have to take the narrow road but many perish from under the gospel. They do not take the opportunity in obtaining any interest of Christ. They do not take care of their salvation but do take care of their health and this life diligently. They do not realize that they are heading on the broad road to destruction. They have heard many awakening sermons and have heard the miseries of hell and they are convicted only for a while and as they go home they are in another world.

Look to your motives! - Our motives are the secret springs of our hearts. Our motives are those hidden things in our hearts that move us to speak and to act. Our lives all issue out from our hearts, like so many streams out of so many deep and hidden springs: and thus it is that we are so often told in the Word of God to "keep our hearts with all diligence." And thus it is that our Lord's teaching is so full of all the matters of the heart; and especially of the hidden motives of the heart. Take good heed of your motives, He says three times to us in this single passage. Be simple in your hearts, He says to us. Be sincere in your hearts. Be pure in your hearts. Be not men-pleasers. Be not eye-servants. Be not "hypocrites." Seek not to be seen of men. Seek secret places. Seek obscurity. Seek and keep silence. Do nothing for the praise, or for the approval. Our Lord's words are always quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow: they are discerners also of the thoughts and intents of our hearts. Our Lord's words strip our hearts bare of all affectation and pretence, display and insincerity, ostentation and hypocrisy. "Thy word, O Lord, is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it." "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Alexander Whyte)