

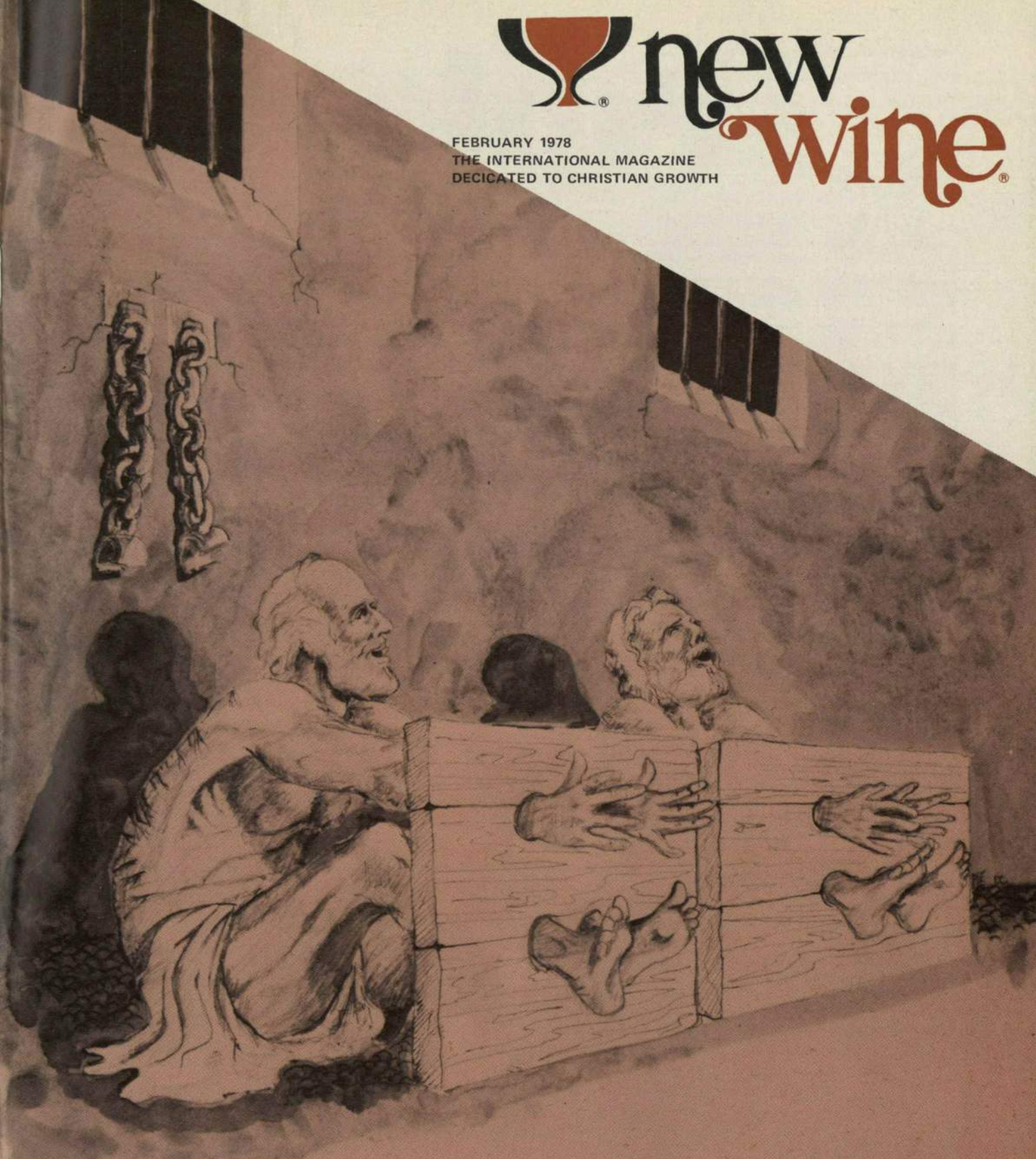


**new
wine**

FEBRUARY 1978

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

DEDICATED TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH



Embracing Suffering

"And about midnight Paul and Silas began to praise God in the inner prison..."

(Acts 16:25)

editorial

When Jesus broke the news to His disciples that "the Son of Man must suffer many things," even death at the hands of His own people, Peter protested, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You" (Mt. 16:22). Peter's reaction typifies a prevalent attitude toward suffering among Christians: "God forbid that we should ever have to suffer hardship."

The Mark 8 account of this incident says that Jesus, "turning around and seeing His disciples . . . rebuked Peter." It's almost as if He were

saying, "For your sakes and what you all will face later, *all* of you had better know the truth." Then Jesus called together the multitude and the disciples to further impress the lesson upon them with phrases like "deny yourself," "take up your cross," and "lose your life for My sake" (Mk. 8:34,35). Jesus wanted to prepare all of them for the hardships they would surely encounter in obeying Him. Such preparation many of us unfortunately missed when we became Christians.

Though hardship and suffering are unpleasant topics for us, the Word of God leaves no doubt as to their reality and inevitability in the Christian life.

So as we begin to adjust our attitude toward Christian suffering, we might ask ourselves the same question Job posed to his wife when she told him to curse God and die: "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10). This issue of *New Wine* deals with that very question of suffering—God's purpose in it, our response to it, and what it is designed to accomplish in us.

Dick Leggatt

I just received my December copy of *New Wine* yesterday. Yesterday I started my Christmas shopping and I found myself very depressed and upset with the whole "Christmas scene." My husband and I have a new baby and money is a definite factor right now.

Having some quiet time last night, I read Don Basham's article "Christmas Is for Families." I cried, praised the Lord, and asked for a new attitude. Thank you, Don, for that story. It is always so helpful to know that God's servants other than yourself have times when they were "down." Thank you again.

Cheryl John
Eureka, CA

I would like to suggest less lengthy interview-type articles. Personally, I don't think the interview has as much depth or continuity as regular articles written for teaching.

Ian G. Landies
Chardon, OH

The personal interviews with CGM teachers are great! I enjoy personal accounts of what's happened in the teachers' lives as well as the fantastic teachings themselves.

Bruce A. Paddon
Melbourne, FL

This recent issue is so good. While reading Ern Baxter's article I felt *literally* lifted off the sofa. Talk about a taste of heaven.

I receive so much more from a speaker or writer when they are telling of circumstances surrounding their own life. The personal interview with Charles Simpson is *real* good. Keep up the good work.

Evelyn Wilkins
El Paso, TX

In the midst of vacuuming our home this morning, I am moved to write to you concerning the subject of "sorrow" and "suffering." God has been teaching me that He is in control of *all* the circumstances in my life. Recently Paul Billheimer's book *Don't Waste Your Sorrows* has been a wonderful confirmation (and comfort) to what God has been teaching.

Mrs. Edward Meister
Wind Lake, WI

Ed.—Thanks for your confirmation of what the Lord was leading us to share in this issue. Your letter arrived while we were planning out the articles for the issue, and we had already decided to use a reprint from Don't Waste Your Sorrows. We are constantly amazed at God's faithfulness to direct us and to confirm that guidance.

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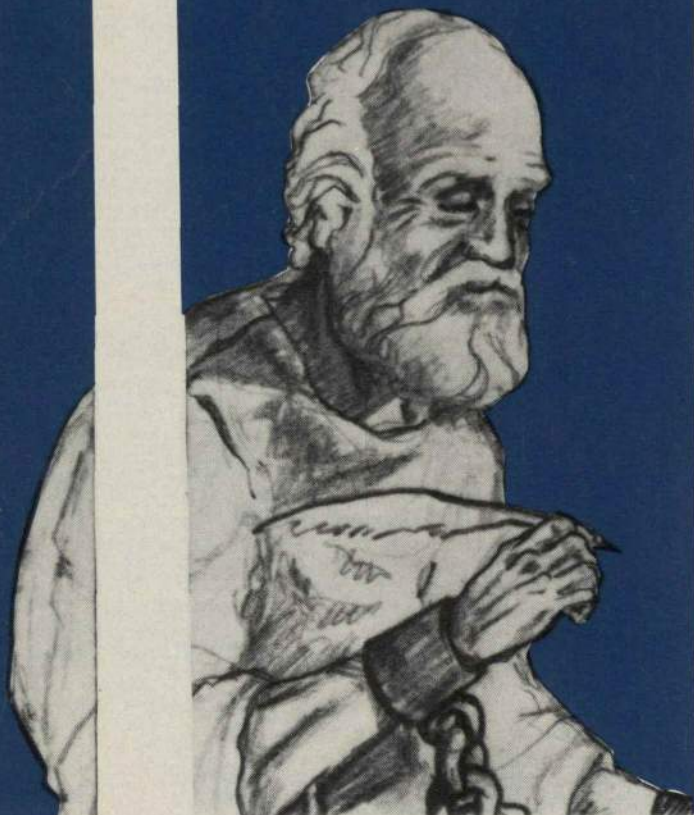
NEW WINE



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MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 1978 VOL. 10, NO. 2



The Trials of Life

How Paul "fought the good fight" and "kept the faith."

by Bob Mumford

In 2 Timothy, Paul is sharing with Timothy how he has come through the conflicts of life victoriously. This is the last letter we have that Paul ever wrote—writing from a Roman jail just prior to being beheaded. In a sense this is his last will and testament to a son whom he loves very much.

Paul is exhorting and encouraging Timothy: "Son, stir up the gift that's within you! Come on, son, there's conflict, but Jesus has given you a promise!" Paul is drawing him, encouraging him, ministering to him. He wanted him to know that victory was possible!

Before we go on, I want to point out to you that one of the great tricks of the enemy is to rob our victory by making us feel that our problem is different from everyone else's. "But if you were married to my wife, you wouldn't have the victory either!" "If you lived in my neighborhood" "If you'd hung around with the kids that I hung around with" The devil makes you feel that your home, or your sickness, or your situation is different—that nobody else has ever been dealt with so unfairly! That is what we call "the pity party."

Now listen to these words: "There hath no tempta-

tion taken you but such as is common to man" (1 Cor. 10:13). There is nothing you have ever gone through that is not common to all of us. There has not been one thing that God did not anticipate. He knows it is possible for your daughter to come home and say, "Mother, I'm pregnant." He knows it is possible for your loved ones to be taken out of this life through an automobile accident. These things happen to people. But they *shouldn't* take our victory.

You say, "Brother Mumford, Paul was different. He was 'Saint Paul'—you know, the one with the halo!" We think, "If Paul were married to my wife, or lived in my neighborhood, or had to drive my car, he wouldn't have the victory." No, Paul was a real man with real life problems. There was no halo hanging off his head. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." Our problem, our situation, our conflict is no different than Timothy's and Paul's.

A VICTORIOUS EXAMPLE

Let's look now at 2 Timothy 4:6–7. Remember that

Paul is writing to Timothy and showing him how he has maintained the victory in his life. In these verses he tells Timothy four things concerning himself and his walk in life.

I. He was ready to die.

He says, "I am now ready to be offered . . ." (vs. 6). The literal meaning is "to be offered as a drink offering." Remember when the three soldiers brought David a drink from the well of Bethlehem? David could not bring himself to drink it, but instead poured it out as a drink offering before the Lord (see 2 Sam. 23:15-17). That is literally what Paul meant—he was ready to die. He was ready to have his blood poured out as a drink offering.

When I come to the end of my life, I want to be able to say with Paul, "I am ready." But if we're going to make a success out of old age, we have to start early.

In 1954 I said to God, "God, when I get to be 70 or 80 years old, I don't want to be an old grouch on a sun porch." Now this is very real to me because when I was studying medicine, I took care of some old grouches on a sun porch! So when I come to the end of my life, I want to go right on out in a blaze of glory. I want to die with my boots on! I just want to ride on out into eternity.

It is the most glorious thing to be able to say, "I'm ready." But we don't get ready by saying, "Lord, I'm sorry. God, I'm sorry I beat my wife. I'm sorry I never paid my tithe. I'm sorry, God. I'm sorry, God. I repent. Now, I'm ready!" That is not what I am talking about; I am talking about a whole life that has been changed by the power of God.

Paul is saying to Timothy, "Timothy, son, don't miss it. When the day comes for you to lay your head down, or lay it on a chopping block, I want you to have lived your life in such a way that you can say, 'I'm ready!'"

Notice also that Paul had no fear of death. I have seen many people die—Christians and heathens alike—and I have seen many of them just about climb the walls because they feared death. One day you'll have to go out

of this world. You came in, and unless Jesus comes, you have to go out. It doesn't matter if you are young or old, tall or short; it doesn't matter what color you are or what your education is: we're all going to go one day because, after all, the last enemy to be destroyed is death. Paul says, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand!"

II. He had fought a good fight.

Paul says of himself in verse 7: "I have fought a good fight." What does that speak of? Conflict! Conflict is the basic ingredient of the Kingdom of God. It is the normal Christian life. Listen to these words: ". . . we must through *much tribulation* enter into the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Paul says, "I have fought a good fight." What were some of the things that Paul fought? False brethren, the devil, afflictions, himself. Now Paul lost some battles along the way. How do I know that? Because he says, "I was knocked down, but I was never knocked out." That is the literal meaning of the Greek. He says, "I lost some battles, but I won the war."

III. Paul finished the course the Lord had laid out for him.

He says, "I have finished my course" (vs. 7). Here I am running along with my friend, Rick. We're plodding along when all of a sudden Rick says, "It's too hard! It's too long!" And off he goes across the track.

I say, "God, did You see what Rick did? He cut across and got there first!"

The Lord says, "You finish your course according to the rules."

Paul did not cheat; he played the game according to the rules. The goal in wrestling is not to throw the guy out of the ring; it's to beat him in the ring according to the rules. The goal in boxing is not just to knock a guy out; it's to knock him out according to the rules. The object of bowling is not just to knock down ten pins; it's to knock them down with a ball according to the rules. There are rules in the Christian life, too. The goal of the Christian life is not to "be spiritual"; the goal is to get spiritual according to the rules. The goal is not to finish first; it's to finish according to the rules!

IV. He kept the faith.

Paul says, "I have kept the faith" (vs. 7). That is a fantastic statement. Paul says, "Just as Jesus showed it to me at the first, that is exactly how I preserved it. When Jesus saved me, baptized me in water and filled me with the Spirit, I received the source of my life. And I have lived by it. I have kept the faith."

"I have fought the fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness . . ." (vss. 7-8). Now that crown



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is not for everyone. Please believe me; it is not. I'll tell you who it's for. It's for those who "love His appearing." (vs. 8). There has to be a certain attitude in your life to love His appearing. Some people say they love His appearing, but their words do not mean anything.

If we love His appearing, we will conduct our lives in such a way that if we knew He were coming tomorrow, there would be nothing that we would change. I don't know of anything I would do differently if I knew the Lord were coming tomorrow. I honestly don't know of anything I would have to do to get ready. I'm sure I could not sleep, but I would not change anything. If you love His appearing, your life conduct will show it.

OVERCOMING THE TRIALS OF LIFE

Now I want to give you seven trials that Paul overcame in his life.



I. He overcame being forsaken.

Verse 10 says, "For Demas hath forsaken me" People say, "Oh, brother, let's all go pray. Hallelujah!" But when you get there, there is only you.

I have been forsaken many times. One time we were building a church and all the men were working on the job. I was down in the hole, digging the foundation for the church with this big pick, and I was digging along when one guy said, "I've got to go take care of my wife."

Another guy said, "I've got to go do something else."

Suddenly I looked up and nobody was there but me. Now I am an educated man! I have a degree! I am a man who works with my brain, not with my muscles. I was digging along and I thought, "Those rascals! Who do they think they are? They left me here all alone in this hole to work like a common laborer!"

I was getting madder by the moment; I was sinking that pick in up to the handle. I was forsaken and I was

mad. Then the Lord said to me, "Who are you digging for?"

I said, "You, Lord."

He said, "Then you don't mind digging alone, do you?"

I said, "No, Sir!"

You can say you are digging for Jesus, but you will not know that for sure until you are forsaken. Everybody says, "Let's all go witnessing!" and nobody shows up but you. You can do one of two things; you can come out victorious, or you can let it defeat you. "I don't understand; everybody around here is backslidden but me!" And it starts eating away at you.

Paul was forsaken. Demas forsook him. And when he came before Nero, all men forsook him. "At my first answer *no man stood with me*, but all men forsook me" (vs. 16). How many of you know that hurt Paul? The men whom he loved most forsook him when he came up for trial.

II. He overcame opposition from people rejecting the truth.

"Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words" (vss. 14 & 15). Here Paul was, preaching—and Alexander was out undoing it. He was saying, "Paul's a liar. That's not the way. He's really a false apostle." The conflict in Paul's life was very real.

Look at another verse: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (vs. 3). There were many people he expected to receive the Word, but they rejected it.

III. He overcame the fear of death.

You say, "Oh, Paul wasn't afraid because he was a saint!" Let me give you a picture of the situation. Paul had to stand before Nero, a homosexual, schizophrenic maniac—a man so demon-possessed that he dipped Christians into hot tar and while they were still alive, he put them up in his garden and lit them at night.

But Paul says, "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (vs. 17). Nero would come by every day and say, "Paul, if you don't deny Jesus, we're going to feed you to Leo out there."

Paul would look out of the window and say, "Glory to God . . . ahhhhh . . ." Don't think that wasn't real to him! Do you think he was anxious to go out there and meet that lion? No, he wasn't. But he was not afraid either.

IV. He overcame physical confinement in a Roman jail.

Not only did he have the lion waiting for him, but he suffered physical confinement in a Roman jail, which

had little or no heat. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Do thy diligence to come before winter" (vs. 21). He said, "I'll have the victory whether you come or not, but if you'd just come a little early, it would help me. And *bring my cloak*."

V. He overcame loneliness.

We don't think about the Apostle Paul ever being lonely. Have you ever been lonely? Have you ever been lonely in a crowd or at a party? Everybody is having a wonderful time, and you are sitting there like a caveman in the back of a cave. Nobody loves you; nobody understands you. You're the reject!

Let me show you why I feel Paul was lonely. In chapter 1 and verse 4 he said, "I am greatly desiring to see thee." And in chapter 4 verse 9, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me." He was a human being like you and me, and he felt the need to be loved and accepted. We never get so spiritual that we don't need people.

I get lonely sometimes. I need love. I need people. I need my wife and family. But even in loneliness I don't lose my victory. Paul learned how to live the victorious life in the midst of loneliness.

VI. He overcame unanswered prayer.

This is a difficult one. "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick" (vs. 20). Trophimus was a man who traveled with Paul. When he got sick, Paul ministered to him, prayed over him, rebuked the devil, did all the things that he knew to do. But it did not work. His prayer was not answered.

I have had many, many prayers answered. I have also had some that were never answered. I have prayed in situations where I just *knew* God was going to answer, but the person died or left town or the situation remained unchanged. I have had unanswered prayer that nearly took my victory until I saw this: "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." There was nothing Paul could do.

Back when I was still studying medicine, I was driving down the highway one day when I came across an accident. When I got over to the man, he was bleeding very profusely. I tried to help him, but he died. It really got to me. The condemnation started to set in and the enemy said, "If you had really known what you were doing . . . if you weren't such a dumbbell . . . if you didn't have two left hands . . . you never knew how to do this anyway." And the condemnation kept piling on until I was really under it.

Three or four days later I was working at the Philadelphia Naval Hospital when I discovered that the chief surgeon of the hospital was dying of a nose bleed. There were several surgeons standing around, but there was not a thing they could do. They had tried everything.

Then it dawned on me: if anybody died of a nose-bleed when I was there, I would condemn myself because I couldn't help him. That is the way it is in the spiritual realm. Because people do not always do or react the way we think they should, the enemy is right there saying, "You messed that up."

Here you are witnessing to your neighbor, and you thought she was going to give her heart to the Lord but she did not. Instead she got mad, and called everybody in the neighborhood, and said, "Do you know Mary? She's a religious nut!" The whole thing blew up in your face and you thought, "If this is what witnessing is, I'm going to quit!"

There are some of you reading this article who have had unanswered prayer or situations you did not understand, and it has become a cancer in your spirit, eating at you. The devil is right there to remind you of those times. He never bothers to remind you of the 92 times your prayers *were* answered; he only reminds you of the 3 times they were not. And he usually adds, "God has forsaken you. He doesn't really love you!" That's the kind of thing Paul had to overcome, the same way we do.

VII. He overcame having a half-backslidden "son."

How do I know Timothy was half-backslidden? Because Paul had to exhort him, "Stir up the gift that is in thee by the laying on of my hands . . ." (vs. 6). And then he goes on to exhort him in three things that had begun to show up in his life as a result of neglecting the gift—fear, shame and the inability to suffer.

Paul writes, "God hath not given us a spirit of fear" (vs. 7). Why did Paul write that to Timothy? Because Timothy was afraid. "Be thou not ashamed of the testimony" (vs. 8). Timothy was not witnessing; he was not sharing; he was ashamed of the fact that he was a friend of Paul who was in jail. And another thing—Timothy did not want to suffer.

PAUL'S SECRET

Paul had to face all of these trials in his life, yet he was able to keep the victory. He demonstrated for Timothy what it was like to live without fear. He did not like the fact that the lion was waiting for him, but he was not afraid. He was ready. How was Paul able to overcome even in the midst of trials? Because he had a secret. One time I said to the Lord, "Lord, what was Paul's secret?"

He said, "Well, it's kind of simple. 'He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, edifieth [builds up] himself' " (1 Cor. 14:4).

Paul said, "I thank my God that I speak with tongues more than ye all!" (1 Cor. 14:18). He said, "Jesus gave

(continued on page 9)

The Mystery of Suffering

Answering the age-old question, "Why do Christians suffer?"

by Francis Martin

To understand the meaning and purpose of suffering in our lives, we must look to the example of Jesus. In obedience to the Father, he endured suffering; it was through pain, suffering, and death that Jesus redeemed us. Now he, in turn, uses suffering to discipline and teach us, to make us holy, to show us the inner life of God—that complete subjection to the other's will that lies at the heart of the Trinity.

"Although he was a Son," the writer of Hebrews says of Jesus, "he learned obedience through what he suffered" (Heb. 5:8). In fact, Jesus suffered *because* he was a Son: "For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (Heb. 12:6). Since Jesus made us sons of the Father through his death and resurrection, we too share in God's discipline: "He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness" (Heb. 12:10).

This discipline of the Lord takes place in suffering. The primary obstacle to an understanding of suffering is our self-centered conviction that God is like a super-aspirin for all our ills. Along with this conviction goes the deep fear that God really doesn't love us. We constantly ask him to prove his love by giving us "success," usually according to the norms of the world. Yet, the Father loves us too much to give in to our need for baby food: "For, whom the Lord loves, he disciplines."

In our technological age, obstacles are things we get rid of. If the mountain is in the way of the highway, level it with an army of bulldozers. If the river is blocking the free flow of traffic, build a bridge over it. If this large crate is in the way, call over the forklift and have it moved. These impulses, properly channelled, are extensions of our responsibility for the world that God has entrusted to us. But what if obstacles in our personal lives don't move as easily? Does that mean something is wrong? What if our efforts in God's service do not meet with success? What if we are sick and not getting better? What if the members of our family are not growing in maturity as we would like them to? What should we do? Improve our prayer technique? Go find someone who can give better advice? That may be the answer, but let us be careful. Today, we run the risk of forging a kind of

"spiritual technology": of devising surefire methods for the removal of obstacles. If the solution doesn't work, it's back to the drawing boards for another technique, as in any technological endeavor.

This sounds peculiar, but such a search for the correct spiritual technology often lurks behind our prayer and behind our other efforts to surmount obstacles. We want success. When it is not forthcoming, there can only be two explanations: either I am doing something wrong and God somehow won't tell me the right way, or God really doesn't care about me, and my life and suffering are meaningless. But look once again at Jesus. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross. He learned obedience through his suffering. Open yourself to a God who doesn't really care about success, but who wants to give us the wisdom of Jesus: a capacity to trust only in the Father, to be able to say to him, "You alone are my joy." Only when we are humbled by our inability to remove obstacles, real obstacles, not just "spiritual trials"—only then can we understand Jesus. This is the whole goal of what the Greek New Testament calls *paideia*, the discipline or education of God.

When we have learned something of the humility of Jesus, we are free. Success, even our idea of spiritual success, does not matter. All that matters is the will of the Father and our deep, quiet trust in him. At that point, the "burden of the sin that hobbles us" begins to fall away. We understand that the Lord has been disciplining us so that we may "share his holiness" and that his correction is yielding "the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

When Jesus said that greatness was littleness, he didn't mean that those who become little will receive a promotion. He meant precisely that there is wisdom in littleness. It is a wisdom hidden from all but those who learn obedience—true trustful obedience—in the face of really imperfect situations. Paul once expressed this

Francis Martin is a frequent contributor to *New Covenant Magazine* and has authored two books—*The Footprints of God*, and *Touching God*.

wisdom when he prayed, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." Why did Paul pray this? "That if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:10–11).

This is the same Paul who had prayed for so many and been heard, and who "begged the Lord three times" that his suffering leave him. The Lord replied, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Paul very properly responded: "I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:8–9).

I know a woman who gave birth to a mongoloid baby early in her marriage. This was the moment of crisis in her life. She had had one child already; her husband was well-to-do; the couple had ahead of them all the material, social, and artistic amenities of an exciting life. Their mongoloid child was not some abstract problem; he meant the changing of their whole life. This was not a burden that would go away "with prayer," this was a mystery of suffering. The woman opened her heart to this mystery. She freely surrendered all those free evenings with interesting friends that she could have had, and she took this child into her arms as though he were Christ. Twenty-one years later, this child is surrounded by a loving family of five other children. This mystery has touched all of them. They reveal it in their lives and in their knowledge of God. Whenever I enter the room

where this boy is sleeping, I feel the presence of the Lord. The child's birth caused the woman to live without much of what she was used to in life. But she has an understanding of Jesus that only comes by "walking as he walked" (1 John 2:6). I know a man, dying, who greeted pain as his "sister." I know of another man, blessed Matt Talbot, who sanctified the sufferings that his previous alcoholism imposed on him and became a vessel bearing the perfume of Christ. I know in my own little way that daily injustices or deprivations in my life are now transformed into opportunities for freedom.

All of us should look at our own lives and try to see what the Lord is teaching us through our imperfections and sufferings. C.S. Lewis once said, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." Pain is the place where we become like Jesus and learn to understand him. When we are afraid of pain, we can look to some people whom we know and who suffer. We can see and touch in them the living presence of Jesus saying to us: "Strengthen your drooping hands and weak knees. Make straight the paths you walk on, so that the lame man does not limp off, but rather is healed." Because of Jesus, being treated as a son of God is not only a blessing, but a joy as well. ☞

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(The Trials of Life continued from page 7)

me a promise when He knocked me off that mule." And it's the same promise He gives you and me. The only difference is in how we use it.

People say, "Oh, Brother Mumford, you must be a mighty man of God." That's foolish talk! Do you want to know my source? I pray in the Spirit; I love the Lord; I stay in the Word.

Have you seen the guy on the beach with all the muscles? You wonder, "Where did he get all those muscles?" I'll tell you—he got them from lifting weights. That's what I'm trying to say to you spiritually; God doesn't give one person more spiritual muscle than the others. Within each of us is the ability to mature and grow up into God. Maturity isn't a gift. It's a matter of building up your spiritual muscles. In conflict, you recognize that God is strengthening your spiritual muscles. When He lets the devil in after you, it's because you need it. And when things go wrong, it's because God is working something in your life.

Paul said, "If you will let that well spring up and flow out and if you will stay in the Word, then the Word and the Spirit will bring you to maturity and to personal victory in this present life."

Paul had to face all of these trials in his life, yet he was able to keep the victory. He demonstrated for Timothy what it was like to live without fear. He did not like the fact that the lion was waiting for him, but

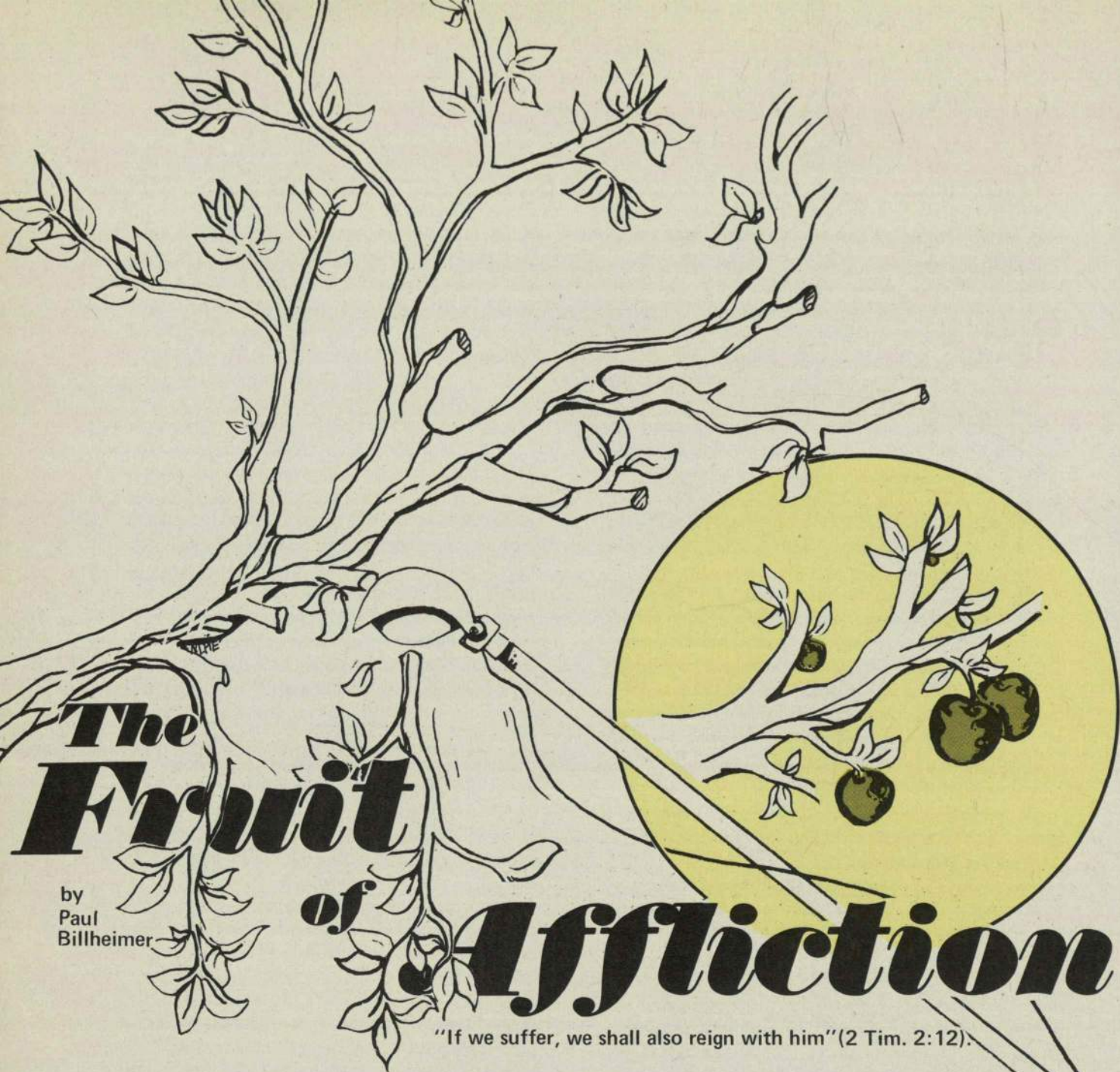
he was not afraid. He was ready.

Where did he get the victory over fear? The same place we are going to get it—*by praying in the Spirit, staying in the Word, letting the Lord build us up inside.*

Paul was not ashamed to suffer for the gospel. He embraced his part of the suffering. When the conflict comes—and I promise you, it will—we must learn to embrace our part of the suffering. There will be times when we are forsaken. There will be times of unanswered prayer. There will be times when all these things will break over our life. But we need to remember, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man."

If your husband forsakes you; if your child is not healed; if your car doesn't start; if your boss fires you tomorrow—go home, get in your prayer closet and pray in the Spirit. Build yourself up in the faith. Our goal is that when these situations come, there will be built up in us a spiritual strength so that we'll be able to say with Paul, "... the Lord stood with me and strengthened me" (vs. 17).

Jesus and Paul were victorious. We have the same potential to live our lives in such a way that when we come to the end of our days, we can say, "I am now ready. I have fought the fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith." I covet that for myself and I covet that for you. ☞



The Fruit

by
Paul
Billheimer

of Affliction

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12).

*This article is excerpted from two chapters of a new book by Paul Billheimer, **Don't Waste Your Sorrows.***

LOVE, THE NORM OF THE UNIVERSE

God is calling and preparing an Eternal Companion called the Bride, who is to sit with His Son on His throne as His co-regent in the ages to come (Rev. 3:21). In order to qualify for this exalted position the members

of the Bridehood *must* be as nearly like the Son as it is possible for the finite to be like the infinite. If they are to qualify for their lofty duties they *must* share the character of God Himself which is agape love. *This is the norm of the universe*, the ideal toward which God is working for the eternal social order. But . . . that quality of character cannot be developed in fallen humanity without suffering.

GLORY AND SUFFERING

This explains Paul's inspired revela-

tion: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12). According to Romans 5:3-5 suffering issues in character (agape love), and character is a prerequisite to rulership. Because there is no character development without suffering, suffering is a necessary preparation for rulership.

MASSIVE DAMAGE OF THE FALL

God pronounced unfallen Adam "very good," but the Fall brought massive damage to Adam and all of his progeny. It left the race self-centered.

Self-centeredness is the very essence of all sin and misery and results in self-destruction. It is the core of hostility, and hostility is the core of hell, the *hallmark* and essence of hell. Self-centeredness is the antithesis of holiness and agape love, the hallmark and essence of heaven.

THE NECESSITY OF DECENTRALIZATION

In bringing an individual into the likeness of His Son, God must decentralize him. Decentralization begins in the crisis of justification and the new birth and continues in the crisis of sanctification or the filling with the Holy Spirit. Of necessity it does not end there. These are only beginning experiences similar to a vestibule which is a good place to enter but a poor place to stay. The work of sanctification by which the self is decentralized is both instantaneous and progressive. It is both a crisis and a process which continues throughout life. "And I am sure that God who began the good work within you will keep right on helping you grow in his grace until his task within you is finally finished on that day when Jesus Christ returns" (Phil. 1:6, LB).

THE WORK OF TRIBULATION

If God's net purpose in saving an individual is just to get him to heaven,

As a teenager Paul Billheimer was filled with the Holy Spirit, and shortly after World War I, he was healed of tuberculosis. An ordained minister of the Wesleyan Church, he served for a time as a Bible college administrator, but left that position due to poor health. After combatting poor health for some 20 years (and after being married fifty years), he began writing *Destined for the Throne*, followed by *Don't Waste Your Sorrows*. Now over 80, Mr. Billheimer is involved in a Christian broadcasting ministry based in California, where he and his wife live.

He would probably take him to glory immediately. But God wants to prepare him for rulership in an infinite universe that demands character. Progress in sanctification, in the development of Godlike character and agape love, is impossible without tribulation and chastisement. "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Rom. 5:3-5, NIV). "My son, don't be angry when the Lord punishes you. Don't be discouraged when he has to show you where you are wrong. For when he punishes you, it proves that he loves you. When he whips you it proves that you are really his child. Let God train you, for he is doing what any loving father does for his children. Whoever heard of a son who was never corrected? If God doesn't punish you when you need it, as other fathers punish their sons, then it means that you aren't really God's son at all—that you don't really belong in his family . . . Our earthly fathers trained us for a few brief years, doing the best for us that they knew how, but God's correction is always right and for our best good, that we may share his holiness [character]. Being punished isn't enjoyable while it is happening—it hurts! But afterwards we can see the result, *a quiet growth in grace and character*" (Heb. 12:5b-8, 10-11, LB—Italics mine).

I walked a mile with pleasure;
She chattered all the way,
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with sorrow;
And ne'er a word said she;
But, O, the things I learned from her
When sorrow walked with me.

CHASTISEMENT AND CHILD TRAINING

It is clear from the foregoing and other similar passages of Scripture that

sorrow, suffering, tribulation, and pain which come to the believer are not primarily for punishment but for child training. They are not purposeless. Earthly parents may make mistakes in their chastisement—and often do. But not God. He is preparing the believer for rulership in a universe so vast that it appears infinite. It seems that God cannot fully decentralize fallen man, even though born again, sanctified or filled with the Holy Spirit, without suffering. Watchman Nee says that we never learn anything new about God except through adversity. Some consider this an exaggeration, but it does seem that few seek a deeper walk with God except under duress.

EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL

The history of Israel illustrates this point. In prosperity she forsook pure Jehovah worship for licentious idolatry. Only by chastisement was she constrained to repent and return to Jehovah. For centuries, while God was seeking to obtain a pure remnant through whom He could bring the Messiah, it was the same routine: prosperity, backsliding, and apostasy; chastisement, repentance, and return to God ad infinitum (Judg. 2:11-19; 1 Sam. 12:9-10; 2 Chron. 15:4; 33:12; Isa. 26:16).

EXAMPLE OF THE PSALMIST

The experience of the Psalmist is illustrative: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I have kept thy Word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalm 119:67, 71). Who of us have not known people with Christian background and training who have wandered far from God and have been brought back to Him through heart attack, cancer, tragic accident, or some other severe affliction?

EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

One of the most amazing commentaries on the purposefulness of suffering in the economy of God is set forth in Hebrews 2:10: "For it became

him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation *perfect through sufferings*." "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience *by the things which he suffered*" (Heb. 5:8). In Christ's case, according to Maclaren, "His perfecting was not the perfecting of moral character but the completion of His equipment for His work as Leader and Originator of our salvation. Before He suffers He has the pity of God. After He suffers He has the compassion of a man."¹ *The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary* says: "By suffering his human experience was made complete. . . . Because he suffered he is now fully qualified to serve as captain (*archegos*, leader) of man's salvation."² If the "many sons" whom Christ was to bring to glory and rulership had to be prepared and perfected for that glory by suffering, their Captain must lead the way by having His human experience perfected in the same way. The fact that Christ's human experience had to be perfected by suffering proves that no suffering is purposeless, but that it is endemic in God's economy.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BROKENNESS

Christ's suffering only matured and perfected His human experience. It purged nothing from His moral nature even as a man because He was unfallen. No stain of sin ever marred His humanity. But not so with fallen man. There is no way that Christlike character can be formed in man without suffering because he cannot be decentralized otherwise. If he will not suffer, if he determines to evade it, if he refuses to allow the life of nature and of self to go to the cross, to that extent he will remain hard, self-centered, unbroken, and therefore unChristlike. "Whole, unbruised, unbroken men are of little use to God" (J.R. Miller). By his self-will one may escape a certain quality of pain, that which accompanies voluntary self-immolation, but in so doing he

becomes the victim of a far greater pain, that of self-worship. He cannot escape both. Someone has said, "There are things which even God cannot do for us unless He allows us to suffer."

THE PAIN OF MORAL CHOICE

Oswald Chambers says that "God does not make us holy in the sense of character; He makes us holy in the sense of innocence, and we have to turn that innocence into holy character by a series of moral choices. These choices are continually in antagonism to the entrenchments of our natural life."³

There can be no spiritual progress, therefore, except through the progres-

"There can be
no spiritual
progress except
through the
progressive
death of the
self-life."

sive death of the self-life. Maclaren has said that every step on the pathway of spiritual progress will be marked by the bloody footprints of wounded self-love. All along the course of spiritual advancement one will have to set up altars upon which even the legitimate self-life will have to be sacrificed.

To make the moral choices that develop Godlike character always causes pain because even after one has been sanctified, filled with the Holy Spirit, one is still fallen. Some people feel that after these experiences of grace, nothing remains in their spiritual life with which God has a controversy. But the work of sanctification is both instantaneous and progressive. It

will continue until glorification.

Sheridan Baker, a writer in the early holiness movement, has said: "But there is much to be done for the believer in the way of chastening, and melting, and mellowing, after this state [the Spirit's baptism] is reached, and consequently, it is not a finality in the process of redemption. . . . The purified believer will not be long in discovering rudeness in his manners which he will deplore and escape, roughness in his speech and tone of voice which he will deprecate and abandon, and other dregs of the old disease which will cling to him, though the disease itself has been removed and from which he will escape 'by little and little' as beautifully symbolized by the conquest of Canaan."⁴

THE SPIRITUALLY STATIC STATE A VICE

One of the greatest vices of the Church is a static state of grace. The fruit of a grapevine is always on the new growth. This is the reason for pruning the vine. Without new growth there is little or no fruit. This is why Jesus said, "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth [prunes] it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2). If the branch had sensibility, pruning would be painful. But without suffering there would be neither growth nor fruitfulness.

Annie Johnson Flint has beautifully expressed this truth:

It is the branch that bears the fruit,
That feels the knife
To prune for a larger growth,
A fuller life.

Though every budding twig be lopped,
and every grace
Of swaying tendril, springing leaf,
Be lost a space,

O thou whose life of joy seems reft,
Of beauty shorn;
Whose aspirations lie in dust,
All bruised and torn,

Rejoice, tho' each desire, each dream,
Each hope of thine
Shall fall and fade; it is the hand
Of Love Divine

That holds the knife,
that cuts and breaks
With tenderest touch,
That thou, whose life
has borne some fruit
May'st now bear much.

SELF-PITY A WASTE

How meaningful are the words of Jesus in John 15:1, "My Father is the husbandman"—not Satan, but *My Father*. Not understanding God's benevolent purpose, when sorrow and suffering come—whether as the result of conflict over moral choices, of pain and physical illness, or of disappointing circumstances—it is easy to fall into a spirit of resentment and self-pity which produces frustration and depression. When this occurs one is defeated in his spiritual life, and character deteriorates. *He has wasted his sorrow*. What God permitted in order to wean him from self-love and self-worship, and therefore for his spiritual growth, has resulted in loss.

COMFORT FROM PAIN

How often one is tempted to question, even mourn the years of disability, invalidism, and pain suffered by saints such as Madame Guyon, Fanny Crosby, Amy Carmichael, George Matheson, and others, out of whose suffering God distilled sweet comfort, healing, and strength for millions of fainting pilgrims. God's frequent transmutation of sorrow into blessing for others is beautifully expressed in these lines:

Out of the presses of pain
Cometh the soul's best wine;
And the eyes that have shed no rain
Can shed but little shine.

This, of course, illustrates only the temporal situation, not the eternal weight of glory which is perceived only as one fastens his vision upon "things that are not seen."

CHARACTER FROM AFFLICTION

Suffering, from whatever source, of whatever nature, and of whatever intensity, plus triumphant acceptance

equals character (Rom. 5:3-4). Character (agape love) is the coin, the legal tender of heaven. Therefore, "our light affliction which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," that is, an exceedingly higher rank. Affliction, triumphantly accepted here, means rank there because this is the way God builds selfless character and develops agape love. Suffering, triumphantly accepted, slays the self-life, delivers one from self-centeredness, and frees one to love.

Those who have thus suffered will form the elite, the aristocracy, the ruling nobility of the future. They will constitute the princes of the ethereal realm.

BLESSED BE SORROW

In order to grow in character it is necessary to understand that nothing that God permits to come to His child, whether "good" or "ill," is accidental or without design. Everything is intended to drive him out of himself into God. "All life is intended to be a pathway to God" (Maclaren). All is for the purpose of character training. *There are no exceptions*. God never slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121:4). Because God is the all-seeing One, Satan cannot "slip up on His blind side." He is never taken by surprise. Only this faith will enable one to understand the statement: "Blessed be sorrow."

BLESSED BE FRUSTRATION AND PAIN

God cannot train one without mystifying him, without baffling him. Evidently God has objectives in us which cannot be achieved apart from frustration and bewildering pain. *Faith cannot be perfected except by apparent denial*. This was the way Job's faith was perfected so that he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). This is the kind of faith that does not depend upon tangible fulfillment. It cannot be

developed without being utterly baffled. God cannot develop this quality of faith in one without apparently denying Himself. Indeed, He may sometimes need to appear to be false as in the case of Job. Or, He may sometimes need to seem faithless as in the case of Abraham offering up Isaac when God's promise and command appeared to be in diametric opposition. In Abraham's case faith was led to the very edge of the precipice. And this meant suffering, probably the most unendurable of all. Until one has weathered this kind of testing and trial of faith, he cannot identify with the author of the following lines:

I will not doubt, though all my
ships at sea
Come drifting home with broken
masts and sails;
I will believe the hand which
never fails,
From seeming evil worketh good
for me.
And though I weep because
those sails are tattered,
Still will I cry, while my best
hopes lie shattered:
"I trust in Thee."

I will not doubt, though sorrows
fall like rain,
And troubles swarm like bees
about a hive.
I will believe the heights for
which I strive
Are only reached by anguish and by
pain;
And though I groan and writhe
beneath my crosses,
I yet shall see through my severest losses
The greater gain.

WHAT IS SUFFERING WITH CHRIST?

We usually think of the afflictions which Paul says are "working for us an eternal weight of glory" as probably in the category of severe persecution or martyrdom. It has been said that in the last twenty-five years more people have suffered severe persecution and martyrdom for Christ than in any other similar period of history. Some of us may yet be called upon to prove our faith and love by accepting a

martyr's crown. But at this point, in the United States, the adversity to which most believers are subject is not the danger of martyrdom or other types of persecution practiced in Communist lands. Today the American believer's afflictions are mostly physical, financial, or in the area of personality conflicts. Is this type suffering included in "these light afflictions" which Paul said are working for us? Is this what he meant when he said "if we suffer we shall also reign" and "if so be that we suffer, that we may be glorified together"?

The answer may be that it is not always the character of the affliction which determines its spiritual value but rather the length of its continuation and one's reaction to it. Whether the suffering is for and with Christ may be determined not so much by its nature and severity as by the quality of one's spirit in which it is faced. For example, to live sweetly with a brute of a man, or a contentious, faithless woman, or an ungrateful, contemptuous, wayward son or daughter, or to live self-sacrificially with a helpless, hopeless invalid for years or for a lifetime, may provide the opportunity to develop martyr strength and a deep dimension of love as truly as severe persecution for Christ's sake.

All affliction is intended to drive one to God. It is intended to work a fuller submission, a more utter devotion, an increasing patience, a greater beauty of spirit, a more selfless love toward both God and man. When it accomplishes this, then it may be classified as suffering *with* Christ and for His sake because it has enabled Him to achieve His end and purpose in that one. It may require a lifetime of God's dealing in discipline and chastisement to produce the true martyr spirit. When suffering of any character is allowed to work in one a deeper dimension of agape love, is it not indeed "suffering with Christ"?

THE TRIUMPH OF SUBMISSION

May affliction which one is now

suffering, and from which he has long and earnestly sought relief, enable him to join the noble army of the heroes of faith in Hebrews eleven? Is it possible that one may join that noble band by facing his illness or other self-crucifying situations in submission and triumph? It seems that Madame Guyon did just that. If the spirit in which she faced and triumphed over her afflictions and sorrows brought more glory to Christ than her deliverance would have, is it not possible that others who are not delivered may do likewise by the way they face their difficulties? May not the multitudes who seek and fail to receive healing, by a proper subjective attitude of submission and courage in their afflictions, transmute them into "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" as did those in Hebrews eleven? The answer is "yes" when they demonstrate a like victory over tribulation.

THE HEROISM OF PATIENT PLODDING

It seems to some that a life which is ended swiftly by an act of martyrdom may be more heroic and a greater testimony of deathless love than a long life of faithfulness in the ordinary trials and tribulations of daily life. But may it not be that God is obtaining a similar quality of selfless devotion and sacrificial love through patient endurance of the routine sorrow, suffering, disappointments, heartaches,

and pain which He permits as a part of His loving child-training? If so, then those who suffer triumphantly, accepting the "things that hurt and the things that mar" with submission, thanksgiving, and praise, may be enhancing their eternal rank in a similar way as did the martyrs. *By a proper reaction while in the school of suffering, they may be learning and demonstrating a quality of agape love which is preparing them for rulership as truly as though they had suffered martyrdom.*

On the other hand, *yielding to self-pity, depression, and rebellion is a waste of sorrow.* Those who have unsuccessfully sought healing and who submit to resentment, discontent, impatience, and bitterness against God are wasting what God intended for growth in love and thus for enhanced rank in the eternal kingdom. ♣

1. Alexander Maclaren, *Exposition of Hebrews*, p. 234.
2. *The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press. Copyright 1971, The Iverson-Norman Associates, New York), p. 909.
3. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935), p. 252. Used by permission.
4. Sheridan Baker, *Hidden Manna* (Chicago and Boston: The Christian Witness Co., 1903), pp. 51, 53.

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We Thought You'd Like to Know . . .

In keeping with our desire to let our "New Wine family" know what is happening at CGM/New Wine, we wanted to tell you that last December, in response to clear guidance from the Lord, Ern and Ruth Baxter moved their place of residence from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida to Yorba Linda, California. Ern will continue in his role on the board of Christian Growth Ministries and as a regular contributor to *New Wine*, as well as maintaining a full schedule of itinerant ministry. We trust you will remember the Baxters in your prayers as they adjust and get settled into their new home.

(Bible Study answers on page 28)

The Apostle Paul stated in Acts 20:27 that he had been careful to declare all the counsel of God to the churches. We see evidence of this not in his writings only, but also in those of the other apostles. Throughout the New Testament we find mention of the trials as well as the triumphs of the early Church. They were prepared, as we should be, to abound in God's goodness or be abased for His name's sake, being fully confident that they could do all things through Christ.

1. For those who are in Christ, all the promises of God are _____ and _____ to the glory of God (2 Cor. 1:20).
2. What did Jesus promise His disciples they would have as long as they were in the world? (Jn. 16:33)

3. Jesus said that a servant is not greater than his Lord. "If they have _____ me, they will also persecute _____" (Jn. 15:20-21).
4. Circle the correct answer. Men persecute Christians because they do not know (vs. 21): a. The Father b. Right from wrong c. The truth d. The way.
5. When Christ suffered for us, what was He leaving for us? (1 Pet. 2:21) _____
6. According to 1 Peter 4:12-14, are we to think it strange when we go through trials? _____
7. When a Christian goes through trials for the name of Christ, what type of spirit rests upon him? (vs. 14)

8. What are we to do when we partake of Christ's suffering? (vs. 14, NAS) _____
9. Why does God comfort us in time of tribulation? (2 Cor. 1:4-5) _____
10. As the sufferings of Christ _____ in us, so our _____ also _____ by Christ.
11. Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 and answer the following questions.
 - A. Did Paul make a "good confession" and hide his trials from the Corinthian church? _____
 - B. In what part of the known world was he ministering at that time? _____
 - C. As a result of the hardships Paul encountered, what sentence did he believe he was under? _____

D. For what purpose? _____

12. Paul rejoiced in his sufferings because he felt it made up for whatever was lacking in the sufferings of _____ (Col. 1:24).
13. When the church at Thessalonica went through persecutions and tribulations, what two fruits of the Spirit did they reveal? (2 Thess. 1:4-5; Gal. 5:22-23) _____
14. The fact that they were enduring in the midst of trials was evidence that they were under the righteous judgment of _____ and were _____ of the _____ of God (2 Thess. 1:4-5).
15. Read 1 Peter 4:15-19 and list four things a Christian should never suffer for:
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
16. It is possible for a person to suffer in the will of God. When this happens, the person should _____ the keeping of his _____ to God as unto a _____ Creator (vs. 19).
17. Even when a whole church goes through testing, God is aware of it and in control because _____ is the _____ over _____ things to the _____ (Eph. 1:20-23).
18. According to Revelation 2:8-11, the church of Smyrna was to undergo tribulation for how many days? _____
19. What was to be their reward for faithfulness? (vs. 10)

20. Study Psalm 37:23-24 and answer the following questions.
 - A. Who orders the steps of a good man? _____
 - B. Is it possible for him to fall and not recover? _____
 - C. Why? _____
21. Many times when Christians suffer, it is neither because of an act of God nor of the devil, but rather because of a lack of wisdom on the Christian's part. Such was the case of Epaphroditus, a coworker of Paul's. Circle the reason for Epaphroditus' illness (Phil. 2:25-30). a. Disobedience b. Exposure to disease c. Overwork.

VICTORY IN PRAISE



When they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon . . . and they were smitten.

by Derek Prince

I have recently been made more aware, personally, of how essential it is to keep praising the Lord, even in the midst of trials. Just recently, I was going through some deep inner conflicts myself and as I was asking God to show me the way out and the resolution of those conflicts, He spoke to me about the necessity of maintaining a life of praise. So I think it is good for us to spend time on the theme of praise, although all I have to share may not be altogether new.

WORSHIP, PRAISE, THANKSGIVING

There are three concepts we find in Scripture that are closely related and yet distinct: worship, praise and thanksgiving. You find all these words occurring very frequently in the Bible so they are all quite important. Now since they are related, yet distinct, I'll begin by just giving you a few key thoughts to distinguish these three concepts.

All the words in Scripture for "worship" describe primarily an attitude or posture of the body. Every

single word, whether from Old Testament Hebrew or New Testament Greek, describes a physical attitude. So I think we need to understand that worship is primarily an attitude.

The three main attitudes of worship spoken of in Scripture are bowing the head, bowing the entire upper part of the body, and prostrating yourself on your face on the ground. Those are the three primary pictures of worship.

When Moses returned from his absence of forty years in the wilderness, and he brought the news to the elders of Israel that God was about to deliver them from Egypt, Scripture

says, "They bowed their heads . . ." (Ex. 4:31). That physical attitude was an act of worship. They just bowed their heads in the presence of God.

We ought always to think about worship in terms of an attitude—not merely a physical attitude, but also a spiritual attitude. I often say to God when I'm alone, "Lord, I bow in my spirit before You."

Praise, on the other hand, is an utterance. Everything in the Scripture shows that praise must come out of the mouth. People sometimes talk about praising God in their heart. I won't say anything against that, but the Bible doesn't talk about that kind of praise. The Bible is very insistent and emphatic that praise must come out of the mouth. Praise is an utterance, and essentially, we praise God *for who He is*.

Thanksgiving, then, comes when we thank God *for what He has done*. I think there's a simple distinction there. We *praise* God for who He is; we *thank* God for what He has done. Now that's not a hard and fast distinction. It's just a way of looking at the different aspects of a total relationship.

You could say, then, that in worship and praise and thanksgiving we relate respectively to three different attributes of God's eternal nature. In worship, we relate to God's holiness. In praise, we relate to God's greatness. And in thanksgiving, we relate to God's goodness. That, I believe, is an important biblical distinction.

A BIBLICAL PICTURE OF WORSHIP

I want to show you a picture of worship and praise in heaven from Isaiah chapter 6. This is the uncorrupted, eternal pattern, described in a vision Isaiah had. In this vision, he saw the Lord, high and lifted up, and "his train filled the temple" (vs. 1). Then the prophet saw the seraphim. This is the plural form of the Hebrew word *seraph*. You can say, "seraphs," or you can say, "seraphim." The word *seraph* is directly related to a primary Hebrew verb which means "to burn or to

blaze." So the seraphim are the burning, blazing, fiery creatures that immediately surround the throne of God.

I want you to notice the way they worship and praise because it is very instructive.

Above it [the throne] stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain [two] he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory (vss. 2–3).

First we have the picture of worship—the attitude. Two wings cover the bowed face in the presence of almighty God; two wings cover the feet; and the remaining two wings are used to fly. The covering of the face and the feet we could describe as worship; "flying" as service. Notice the order and the proportion. Worship comes before service, and is twice as important as service. Four wings are for worship; only two wings for flying.

That lines up with the answer Jesus gave Satan in the wilderness when He was being tempted. Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said, "Now, if you will fall down and worship me, I'll hand it all over to You." Notice, that it was an attitude he demanded of Jesus—to *fall down* before him.

Let me comment here that we ought to be fearfully careful about any kind of attitude in our lives that represents worship directed to anyone but God. Sometimes the attitude of some people who follow pop singers and rock singers almost transfers a kind of worship to a human being that belongs uniquely and solely to God. That is terribly dangerous because the thing you worship takes control of you. The more you worship the true God, the more He controls you. But if you divert that worship in any other direction, the thing you worship will begin to take control of you.

Jesus refused Satan's bargain and said, quoting Deuteronomy, "It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord

thy God and him only shalt thou serve" (Mt. 4:10). Notice again the order. Before you *serve*, you *worship*. I believe a great difference would come in our experience if we would never offer God service without first offering Him worship. I think our service would be different. We'd do things better, and some things we now do, we wouldn't do if we began by worshipping God.

APPROPRIATE PRAISE

Now, with that introduction to worship, praise and thanksgiving, in the rest of this article I want to deal with the theme of praise.

One key verse, for me, at any rate, is Psalm 48:1—"Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness." The Lord is great, and for that reason He is to be praised. As we have already said, praise relates us to God's greatness. And He's to be praised in *proportion* to His greatness. Because He's great, He's to be greatly praised. Praise is the appropriate response to God's greatness.

The Bible is full of exhortations to praise the Lord. I've never tried to count them, but there must be several hundred. You might ask, "Well, why is God always demanding praise?" Really, God isn't demanding praise. Rather, He's giving us the privilege of praising Him because praise is the *only* appropriate response to His greatness.

Now, I want to just give you seven scriptural facts about praise. I won't dwell on any of these although one could dwell on any of them and make a complete message out of each of them. Since I want to give you a general overview of the whole theme of praise, I won't dwell on any particular section at length.

PRAISE: GOD'S ADDRESS

The first thing I want to say is that praise is God's address; it's where He lives. So if you want to be where God lives, you have to offer Him praise. Psalm 22:3 says, "Thou art holy, O

thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."

The Hebrew word meaning "to live in a place" is the same word for "to sit." We won't go into all the reasons for this, but to "sit" somewhere is to "live" there. A settlement—a living place—is a place of sitting. I think we need to include the thought of sitting to get the full impact of the verse. It says, "God *sits* upon the praises of His people": or as the Swedish Bible has beautifully translated it, "Thou art holy; thou who art *enthroned* on the praises of Israel."

Praise is God's throne. Our praise doesn't *make* Him a King because He is King anyway, whether we praise Him or not. But when we praise Him, we offer Him His throne. We make Him welcome. We recognize His Kingship. Praise is God's dwelling place and His throne.

THE WAY INTO HIS PRESENCE

Praise is also the way into God's presence. Psalm 100:4–5 tells us:

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Notice that praise and thanksgiving are closely associated and that the way into God's gates and into His courts is with praise and thanksgiving.

Then in verse 5 the scripture gives us three reasons why we ought to praise God. The Lord is good. His mercy is everlasting. His truth endureth to all generations. Because each of those statements is *always* true, there

is never a situation in which it is not appropriate to praise God. Praise doesn't depend on our visible situation or circumstances, nor on our feelings. It's based on three eternal, unchangeable facts: God is good; His mercy is everlasting; His truth endures to all generations. That is true no matter *what* happens, and if you want to get into God's presence, that's the only gate. There is no other.

Isaiah 60:18 gives us a beautiful description of the dwelling place of God and His people.

Violence shall not be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

So God lives in a city surrounded by a wall that's called Salvation, and Scripture is very clear and emphatic in many places that the only way through that wall is by the gate. No one will ever enter any other way but by the gate. And every gate is *praise*. In other words, no praise means no access to God's presence and the place where His people dwell.

PRAISE AND GOD'S BLESSING

The third point about praise is that it is God's reason for blessing us. It is God's interest on what He invests in us. I'll give you just two scriptures. First Psalm 106:47:

Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations to give thanks unto thy holy name and to triumph in thy praise.

Notice again that thanksgiving and praise are closely joined together. Why

does God save us and bring us together as His people to fellowship with Himself and one another? What does God want as a response from us? To give thanks unto His name and to *triumph* in His praise.

There's a difference between a victory and a triumph. The victory is the winning of the battle; the triumph is the celebrating of the victory that's already been won. In 2 Corinthians 2:14 Paul says, "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." God wants us not merely to have the victory—He wants us to *celebrate* it. He wants us to share the triumph in His praise.

I'll share just one other scripture on this theme. David had been through a long dark period in his life. I'm sure many of us could look back over things that are similar in our lives. As a matter of fact, the Lord made this a very vivid personal message to me when I lost my wife. It actually was fulfilled in my experience.

Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou has put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

To the end that [this is the purpose] my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever (Ps. 30:11–12).

Again, praise and thanksgiving are in the same verse. But notice that God does these things that our glory may sing praise unto Him and not be silent. Now what is our glory? If we compare two scriptures, there is no doubt to the answer. In Psalm 16:9, David says,

Therefore my heart is glad, and my *glory* rejoiceth.

But Peter, on the day of Pentecost, quotes this verse from Psalm 16 in Acts 2:26, applying it to Jesus Christ:

Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my *tongue* was glad.

What does that tell us? That my glory is my tongue. When the Bible

Just Around the Corner

Our next issue of *New Wine* will examine a pair of persistent problems in the Body of Christ: fear and insecurity. We will feature articles by Jim Reid on the security of the believer and by Dick Williams on overcoming the fear of rejection. In addition the issue will carry related articles by Bob Mumford and Dick Key.

says, "My glory will give thanks unto thee," it means, "My tongue will give thee thanks." That's why David says, "And not be silent." What is the organ of the body that either speaks or is silent? It's the tongue. So you see your tongue is your glory.

Do you know why? What was God's primary purpose in giving you a tongue? To praise Him. So, your tongue is your glory because, above all the other members of your body, it's the one with which you may most perfectly praise and glorify God.

Remember, then, that God blesses you, delivers you, takes away your mourning and your sadness so that your glory will praise Him and not be silent.

PRaise: OUR SPIRITUAL GARMENT

Let's look now at a fourth aspect of praise. Praise is a *garment* of the spirit. It's part of our spiritual clothing. Isaiah 61:3 speaks about the coming of Messiah and what He would do. It says, without going into the background, "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes [ashes being the emblem of mourning] the oil of joy for mourning [oil being always an emblem of the Holy Spirit], the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

The garment of praise *in place of* the spirit of heaviness. In modern English the spirit of heaviness is depression. Many have heard me testify how for years I struggled as a preacher with the problem of depression. One day God gave me those words "the garment of praise in place of the spirit of heaviness." He showed me that my problem was an evil spirit—the spirit of heaviness. I was delivered from it, and then He showed me how to keep free—by putting on the garment of praise. When you wear the garment of praise, the spirit of heaviness finds someone else to bother—because you bother him more than he bothers you.

Let's look at one other scripture on the garment of praise. Psalm 33 verse 1 says, "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye



righteous; for praise is comely for the upright." "Comely" means beautiful, so when you put on that garment of praise, in the Spirit, you're looking your best. It suits you. It adorns you.

SALVATION AND PRAISE

Point five is that praise is a way of deliverance. Psalm 50, verse 23, in the King James Version reads like this:

Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me [God is speaking]: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

I believe it would be legitimate, though somewhat free, to translate that verse this way: "Whoso offers praise glorifies Me and prepares a way that I may show him My salvation." Through praising God we open the way for Him to intervene supernaturally on our behalf. There are many examples in Scripture where the intervention of God is brought about by praise.

Let's look at one well-known example in 2 Chronicles 20:21–22. A strong alien army was invading Judah, and King Jehoshaphat realized he did not have the military resources to meet this army. So he resorted to spiritual weapons instead. Before they marched out to the battle in accordance with God's instructions, this is what they did:

And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever.

Now as many people have pointed out, that's a strange battle strategy. Instead of sending out the tanks first, they send out the choir to praise God. It sounds crazy, but they had one advantage. It worked. What happened when they began to praise the Lord?

When they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

When God's people praised the Lord, God intervened and dealt with their enemies.

Let's look at another example from the story of Jonah. All of us are probably familiar with the story about how Jonah disobeyed God. If you read the story carefully, you'll see that from the moment he disobeyed God, every step he took was a step downward. He lived in the mountains. He went down to the sea coast. He went down from the coast into the harbor. He went down from the harbor into the ship. From the ship into the sea, and from the sea into the fish. Let that be a warning to you: when you turn your back on God, every step you take from then onwards will be a step downwards.

So there Jonah was in the fish; and we read his prayer in the second chapter of Jonah. (I would say that being inside a fish would motivate you to pray pretty fervently.) At any rate, he prayed for about seven verses and was still inside the fish. But in verse 9, he changed from praying to giving thanks. It says, "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed." The next

verse says, "The Lord spake to the fish and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." What brought about God's intervention? Not praying, but *thanking*.

Then in the New Testament in Acts 16, Paul and Silas are in jail. It's midnight. They've been beaten. Their backs are covered with blood. They're in the inner prison—in maximum security. Their hands and feet are in the stocks. And what crazy thing will they do next? They start to pray and to praise God.

It says in verse 25 of Acts 16: "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them [the Greek says, 'the prisoners listened attentively. They'd never had anybody in that prison act *that way before*]. And suddenly there was a great earthquake . . ." All the doors were opened, and everybody's bands were loosed. What provoked the earthquake? Praise. When they praised, God intervened supernaturally. This is a consistent principle of Scripture. If you want the supernatural intervention of God on your behalf in a difficult or impossible situation, the key that will release it is your praise. And usually it's at a time when you would feel least like praising God in the natural.

PRAISE: A SPIRITUAL WEAPON

Praise is also a weapon of spiritual warfare. In Psalm 8, verse 2, David is speaking to the Lord. He says, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." The enemy and the avenger is Satan. To "still" is "to silence"—or "shut up." Why do we need to shut Satan up? What's he doing to us all the time? He's accusing us before the throne of God day and night. He never takes time off. He doesn't work a five-day week. Every day and every night of the week he's accusing us.

Why is he accusing us? He wants to make us feel *guilty* because as long as you feel guilty, you are no match for the devil. So, he accuses you.

How can we silence him? David says a strength that comes "out of the mouth" will do it, but that doesn't tell us exactly what it is. Jesus quoted this scripture in Matthew 21:16, and as we look at this verse I want you to notice how often Scripture comments on Scripture.

Jesus said, "Yea; have ye never read [quoting Psalm 8], Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected *praise*." David said, "...thou hast ordained *strength*." Jesus, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, changed it to, "...thou hast perfected *praise*."

"If you want the supernatural intervention of God on your behalf in a situation, the key that will release it is your praise."

What does that tell us? It tells us the ordained strength of God's people is perfect praise. When we offer God perfect praise, in the unseen realm that our natural eyes cannot penetrate, we silence Satan. We shut him up. We take from him his great weapon of accusation.

No wonder the devil doesn't want you to praise God—he knows what's going to happen to him if you do. No wonder praise is a struggle. No wonder there's a kind of sound barrier that you find it hard to break through. Because when you do break through, you're beginning to deal with the real source of problems in the heavenlies.

We won't dwell on this but look for a moment in Psalm 149.

Let the saints be joyful in glory:

Let the high praises of God be

in their *mouth*, and a two-edged *sword* [the Word of God] in their hand;

To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people;

To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron (vs. 5–8).

That's talking about the unseen satanic forces in the heavenlies. When we offer God perfect praise, directing it into the heavenlies, we bind the satanic forces that oppress the human race. Then comes deliverance.

THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

The last point I want to make about praise is that it is a sacrifice; it costs you something. There's a beautiful scripture in the King James—Jeremiah 33:11—that describes what's going to happen after Israel is restored. In place of desolation and misery and mourning, it says they're going to have

The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of Hosts: for the Lord is good; for his mercy endureth forever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord.

I like that translation because I believe it brings out the real meaning. The sacrifice God wants us to bring into His house is praise. This is very clearly stated in Hebrews 13:15–16:

By him therefore [by Jesus Christ] let us offer the *sacrifice of praise* to God continually, that is, the fruit of our *lips* giving thanks to his name.

If you praise God when you feel happy and everything's going well—it's good; but it's not a sacrifice. When everything is going wrong, and you still praise God, that's a sacrifice. It costs you something to praise God when you don't feel like it, but that's the time we most need to praise God. Because, believe me, that will mature

you. It will make a grown-up Christian out of you to deny your feelings and your emotions and your impulses and what your senses tell you and say, "I'm going to praise God for three reasons: He's good; His mercy is everlasting; His truth endureth to all generations. None of those reasons ever changes. Now is the time to praise the Lord."

Don't let your natural mind dictate to you. You say, "I've nothing to praise God for now. Everything's gone wrong." Something in us has to be crucified. The old nature that lives by the senses—by what it sees and feels—has to die. And believe me, it doesn't die willingly. It has to be put to death. One of the best ways to do it is to praise God when you don't feel like it, and go on praising Him until you *do* feel like it. And if you praise Him long enough, you won't be doing it merely in faith any longer. You'll be doing it because you want to.

QUESTIONS ON PRAISE

Now then, we just come to a few closing questions.

When should we praise God? I'll give you two answers.

Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever (Ps. 145:2).

That doesn't leave out much, does it? Everyday, for ever and ever.

Then Psalm 34, which is one of the psalms that has a little explanation at the beginning, telling us when it was written. It says, "A psalm of David when he changed his behavior before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed." David had had to flee from his native land, and from King Saul who was trying to murder him. He had taken refuge in the court of a gentile king named Abimelech, and because Abimelech was a natural enemy of Israel, and David was Israel's main warrior, his life was in tremendous danger. So in order to protect himself, he had to pretend to be mad. Scripture says that he slobbered on his beard and scraped on

the doors with his nails like a madman. And the king said, "Why have you brought this fellow to me? Do I need any more madmen?" (1 Sam. 21:13–15).

So there was David—running away from King Saul, his cruel enemy and persecutor, taking refuge in the court of a gentile king, acting mad in order to protect himself. Now, when you get that background, read the first verse of Psalm 34 to get David's reaction to that situation: "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth." That's what makes a man of God. When you're down, and everything's against you, and you can see no natural reason for doing it, you say, "I'll bless the Lord at all times. My mouth will never be empty of His praise."

HOW DO WE PRAISE

The second question is: *how do we praise God*. These are just glimpses. They're not in-depth studies. In Psalm 111, the psalmist says, "I will praise the Lord with my whole heart" (vs. 1). I think it's grievous to praise God in a half-hearted way. Sometimes I see people in praise services who are just mouthing a few words. They're languid and droopy and they're just wondering, "When are we going to hear the preacher?" I think it would be better not to praise God at all rather than to praise Him like that. It really is insulting His majesty. If we can't praise Him with the whole heart, let's not do it at all. He's worthy to be praised with our whole heart, so put everything you've got into praising God.

Then Psalm 47, verse 7, says: "For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding." That's The King James Version. The Hebrew word for "understanding" means "something to make you wise; something that requires skill and cleverness." So the King James Version is legitimate: "Sing praises with understanding." But it's more than that: "Sing praises with skill."

Again, how often do we offer the

Lord half-hearted music? We don't practice. We just sit down and begin to play. God says, "I want you to praise Me with *skill*." If you have musical ability, use it. People that have musical ability ought to appreciate what it is. I can't carry a tune. I can't play an instrument. Sometimes I'm almost crazy with jealousy. I'm like the prophet Elisha—when he wanted to get in the Spirit, he had to send for a minstrel to play for him.

If you have musical ability, you owe it to God to do your best. Don't offer Him something second rate. I thank God for dedicated musicians who put everything they've got into praising God the best way they can with the skill that God has given them. Now that glorifies God.

Another point in answering the question "how to praise God" is in Psalm 63:4: "Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name."

Why not put them all the way up? Has anybody died? Why should the flag be at half-mast? If you're going to do it, why not do it all the way? For some of you there's still a little religious demon perched on your shoulder, saying, "What will the person behind you think?" Forget about the person behind you! What will *God* think? That's more important. God says, "Praise Me with your hands lifted up."

Let me say with regard to thanksgiving that the Hebrew word for thanks is directly related to the Hebrew word for the hand. In other words, even giving thanks is an action of the hand.

Now look at the next verse in Psalm 63:

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my *mouth* shall praise thee with joyful *lips* (vs. 5).

So the hands, the mouth, and the lips are all instruments of praise. Your whole body is involved in praising God.

Just two more scriptures: Psalm 149:3.

Let them praise his name in the dance.

And then Psalm 150:4.

Praise him with the timbrel and dance.

It is scriptural to praise God in dancing. Now there are different kinds of dancing, and I've tried more than one kind. I'm reminded of the man who was very worldly and haunted bars and night clubs. He got gloriously saved, and this was his testimony.

He said, "When I got saved, I didn't stop drinking: I just changed the brand. I didn't stop dancing: I just changed the floor."

Really, that's my testimony, too. I used to be out dancing five nights a week. Some of you may find that hard to believe. Well, when I was converted I stopped dancing for a while. I thought I was going to be religious, respectable and do what people did in church. But after a while I discovered that dancing is a very important way to praise the Lord. As a matter of fact, dancing is what really liberated me.

I was at a church in Chicago and Brother Harry Greenwood was there from England. Harry is a very lively brother—and he was leading the singing and I was on the platform as one of the leaders. Well, I felt I wanted

to praise the Lord. Furthermore, I felt I wanted to dance. I thought to myself, "What will those people think?" And then I thought to myself, "So what? Whatever they think is fine." So I started to dance. And once I got started, it got better and better the longer it went on. It was a very warm place, and after a while I took my jacket off and went on dancing. I could see my wife looking at me with that kind of look from the front row that says, "There's something wrong," and I looked down and my shirt was coming out. But I still went on dancing. I danced so long that somebody had an opportunity to leave the church, go home, get a camera, come back and take a photograph of me.

You may ask, "What did that do for you?" Probably many things, but one thing it did for certain was to set me free finally from the fear of people. I made up my mind that if God wanted me to do something, I'd do it, regardless of what anybody thought. Now that doesn't mean we should act in an unseemly way. We always need to bear in mind the weak brother or the unbeliever. Paul says, "I could do a lot of things, but I don't because the love of Christ constrains me" (1 Cor. 6:12; 2 Cor. 5:14, paraphrase). He says, "When I'm beside myself, it's to God. But when I'm sober, it's for your

sakes" (2 Cor. 5:13, paraphrase). So I'm not saying to turn loose everywhere and act in an unseemly way. But when God, the Holy Spirit, prompts you, you obey Him. You'll enter into a new level of worship and joy that you never knew.

WHO SHOULD PRAISE GOD?

Who should praise God?

Psalm 148 lists 29 different categories of creatures and people that are exhorted to praise God, and I'm sure you must be included somewhere.

But just in case anybody was left out, the last verse of Psalm 150 says, "Let *everything* that hath breath praise the Lord." Why was your breath given to you first and foremost? To praise God with. Therefore, you're misusing your God-given breath if you don't praise Him with it.

Now let me answer just one final but important question. *Is there anybody who doesn't praise the Lord?*

The answer is, "Yes." You find it in Psalm 115, verse 17: "The dead praise not the Lord." That's the only group of people. So if you don't praise the Lord, you know your problem. You died and didn't realize it. If you want to come alive, what are you going to have to do? Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! 🕊

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GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY

Why does God allow us to undergo hardships?

by Jim Croft

Most charismatic Christians are fairly well acquainted with the basic principles of the Kingdom of God and the Christian life—principles like water baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, entrance into God's Kingdom by faith and repentance, and the government of God. Most of us are familiar and comfortable with prophecy, visions, gifts of healing and miracles—areas we recognize as special unctions and anointings of the Holy Spirit.

What I want to discuss in this article is a special anointing of the Holy Spirit that every born-again believer has—a special unction from the Spirit of God that rests upon each of us and assures us we are worthy of the Kingdom of God. This special unction is evidence

that His glory is with you.

To see what this anointing is, let's look at 1 Peter 4:13–14:

but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because *the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you* (NAS).

If you're reviled, if you're persecuted, if you're afflicted, the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. A passage similar to this one is 2 Thessalonians 1:4–5:

therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance

and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering (NAS).

What does Paul say is a "... plain indication of God's righteous judgment" to determine whether we're worthy of the Kingdom of God? Perseverance and faith in the midst of suffering. Paul was boasting about how these believers were handling God's special anointing for suffering and hardships.

One other verse: Philippians 1:29—"For to you it has been granted not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (NAS).

It's not altogether easy to hear this kind of message. Nobody likes to hear about suffering. We would much rather hear an inspiring sermon. We say, "Oh, Lord, that I might prophesy; that I may touch Your people and heal them in the name of Jesus." When those things happen, it feels good and we rejoice. But God is seeking people who will rejoice just as much over His anointing to bear hardships as with His anointing to do so-called "great works."

For most of us, our first reaction to the idea of suffering is to run from it. But I encourage you, don't run from it: smile, receive it, and embrace it. You say, "But, Jim, what about the promises we're given in Scripture?" Well, it's true that there are many great and precious promises. But it just so happens that the promise of affliction is one of them.

THE PROMISES

The Bible says that *all* the promises of God for us in Christ Jesus are "yea and amen," and I want to point out a few of them to you. In John 15, the Lord made a promise. He said, "Just as they've hated Me and persecuted Me, so will they hate and persecute you" (vs. 18, paraphrase). There's *one* promise.

In the parable of the sower in Mark 4, Jesus talks about the seed which falls upon stony ground and immediately springs up, but endures for only a short time in the scorching sun. In His explanation for the seed not surviving, Jesus says, "... when affliction or persecution arises..." (vs. 17, NAS). Notice He doesn't say, "*if* persecution arises"; He says, "*when* persecution arises." It's a promise.

One day the Lord was with His disciples, and Peter asked, "What's going to happen to all of us who have

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given up everything to follow you?" Jesus answered, "No one has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My sake who shall not receive a hundred times as much in the present age, *with persecutions*" (Mk. 10:29-30, paraphrase).

Preachers often say, "Give unto the Lord, and it shall be given back to you, pressed down, shaken together, running over." The thing they usually fail to mention is that little phrase, "... with persecutions." That can put a damper on any offering.

Here are some more scriptural promises of hardship. We could paraphrase 1 Peter 2:18-21 like this: "You have been called to endure sufferings with Jesus Christ as your example." Acts 14:22 says, "Through *many* tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (NAS). And 2 Timothy 2:12 says, "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (NAS). If we endure suffering, we shall reign with the Lord Jesus Christ.

PROMISES TO PAUL

Now, all of us like to hear prophecies because we know that prophecy is given for edification, exhortation and comfort (1 Cor. 14). We all know what comfort and edification are, but what is exhortation? That's when you are urged to press on and to stand strong. Well, the apostle Paul got some exhortations from the Lord soon after he was saved that most of us would not enjoy hearing. As a matter of fact, if we heard them, we might be tempted to call them false prophecies simply because of our desire to only hear the edifying and encouraging things.

Take for example the word God gave to Paul through Ananias. The Lord came to Ananias in the midst of the night and said, "Ananias, rise up. I want you to go to the street called 'Straight' and lay hands on a man called Saul of Tarsus that he might be healed and receive the Holy Spirit. I've chosen that he should speak My name before kings, and I want to show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9).

Now we don't know everything Ananias told Paul when he laid hands on him to receive the Holy Spirit, but we do know that God had him to tell Paul that God had called him to preach the gospel, to stand in the presence of kings, *and to suffer* much for the sake of the gospel.

To see how faithful God was to fulfill that word for Paul spoken to Ananias, let's look at 1 Corinthians 4.

For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.

To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless;

and we toil, working with our own hands; when we're reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;

when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now (vss. 9–13, NAS).

Isn't that pleasant? Considered the very dregs of society, the scum of the earth, without proper clothing, cold, not knowing where they were going to lay their heads at night. Anyone who has ever desired to be a great man of God needs to read these verses and observe, as James did in chapter 5 of his letter, "Look and see the sufferings and afflictions of the prophets" (vs. 10, paraphrase). Just like the apostles and prophets, any child of the Lord will go through some type of affliction.

We should be aware, as Paul was, of the hardships that await us. When he was getting ready to go to Rome, he told the elders in Ephesus, "The Holy Spirit has told me that bonds and afflictions await me in Rome," but he went to Rome anyhow.

US TOO

As children of the Lord, we need to have the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus, who knew that there was a cross and daily dying before Him. We should be as Paul, who, for the cause of Christ, would not let even the certainty of suffering stop him. We need to learn from Paul's example because Paul was not only faithful in these things himself, but he was faithful to let others know what awaited them. He never gave just part of the truth to new believers—he gave them the full story. Many times when people become Christians, we want to protect them and assure them that everything will be rosy and nice. But like the song says, "I never promised you a rose garden," and you should never promise people rose gardens either because you enter the Kingdom of God with much tribulation.

Look at what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 3:1–5

Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone;

and we sent Timothy, our brother, and God's fellow-worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith;

so that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that *we have been destined for this*.

For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.

For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain (NAS).

Paul was a real pastor. He didn't give people just one side of the truth. He gave them everything because he

"It's true there are many great and precious promises, but the promise of affliction is one of them."

didn't want his labor to be in vain. In the same way we need to give them everything.

WHAT PURPOSE DOES SUFFERING SERVE?

Why does God allow us to go through tribulation? Why does He allow us to go through afflictions? One reason, again from Paul's experience, can be seen in 2 Corinthians 4:8–12:

we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;

persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

So death works in us, but life in you (NAS).

One reason the Lord lets His people go through hardships is because it's one way, possibly the only way, your experience can be a pathway for other people to have life. Paul said, "There's death working in us; but life in you."

For example, you go through a hard time in which you're perplexed and pulled down. But by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you make it through, even though it causes some dying within you. Then someone who is facing the same situation comes to you and you can speak to them the word of faith because you have been through it yourself. For that person, seeing someone who's actually been through it will spark faith in his heart and give immediate life and strength to overcome. So the death that was worked in you is the price you pay to see life come in others.

A second reason is given in Ephesians 5:27, where the Lord says He wants to present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish. God wants to present Himself with a beautiful, chaste bride with a proven

character, who can stand in the midst of any temptation or turmoil as she rules with Christ in the ages to come. She's being prepared now through suffering in order to reign with Christ.

We see this in Romans 8:17, where it says that if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified with Him. We all want to reign with Him and to be glorified with Him. We want the glory of God resting upon us both now, and in eternity. The price tag is going through the afflictions of Christ, going through persecutions with Him.

We see another purpose in God allowing us to go through hardships in Romans 5:1–5:

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult [dance or leap] in hope of the glory of God.

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations [we dance and rejoice in our tribulations]; knowing that tribulation brings about *perseverance* (NAS).

The King James version says "patience." When you go through tribulations, it works endurance in you—the ability to stand. It brings about in you patience, which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, or perseverance.

and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

and hope does not disappoint; because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (NAS).

You go through something, determined you're going to stand, but you don't come through as successfully as you would have liked. Then some time later you face the same test again, but this time you're able to stand with more ability. And it's even easier to get through it the next time. That builds within you a hope so that the next time the trial comes around, you say, "Hallelujah! I'll meet it right in the face, and I'll come out of this with more than I went into it with. Hallelujah!"

LEGITIMATE REASONS FOR TRIALS

The Lord knows the hardships we go through, and by His design there is a variety of legitimate reasons for which we can fall into persecutions and trials. The thing I want to stress before we cite them is that they are all *normal experiences* for Christians; all simply a part of the Christian life.

1. Sometimes it's simply the devil—1 Peter 5:8–10:

Be sober of spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

But resist him firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

And after you have suffered for a little, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you (NAS).

Even the trials that the roaring lion puts upon us, the Lord uses to perfect and confirm and establish us. Peter is also saying that these things are not happening to you alone. They happen to every Christian—every single Christian gets jumped by the devil.

2. Sometimes it's the prunings of the Lord—John 15:1,2:

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser.

"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit" (NAS).

Our Lord is a very wise vinedresser. When something in us has died, it is no longer beautiful for Him to look upon, so He cuts it away. Other times, when we've been fruitful in ministry—winning people for the Lord, accomplishing great things—He sees that fruit and desires more. So He'll prune back that particular stem, and for a while there's no more fruit where we've always had an ability. What's happening? The sap is storing up; energy is building up, so that when the stem *does* come forth again, it will have more fruit than ever before. Often we must go through what seems to be a hard trial and spiritual death by having a fruitful area cut away so we'll bear even more fruit.

3. Sometimes it is the chastenings of the Lord—Hebrews 12:6:

"For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives" (NAS).

Now this is always the direct result of doing something wrong. In that case, you are subject to the chastenings of the Lord. And when you fall into His chastening, though it is "only for a moment," as the Bible says, it is still a fearful thing.

One thing I want to tell you about chastening: whenever He punishes us, He always tells us why. If you ever have to wonder, "Why has this happened to me?" and you've sought the Lord for the answers but He hasn't told you, you may be experiencing condemnation rather than chastening. And condemnation is of the devil because the Lord lets you know what He's doing and why.

One example of that in Scripture was David's sin with Bathsheba. David had sinned greatly by taking another

man's wife and having that man killed. Because the Lord was so displeased with this, He told David in advance that the child born out of David and Bathsheba's union would die. Even though David fasted and prayed for the child, God fulfilled the punishment He had promised and they lost the child. David was a man after God's own heart, and if God could chasten him, He can also chasten us.

4. Sometimes there's something in our life that God, the righteous Judge, has to sentence to death—2 Corinthians 1:8–9:

For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead (NAS).



Sometimes the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ and God the Father meet in counsel of judgment and they say, "That self-love that Jim has—we're going to sentence it to death. It's got to die." Or, "That ability to always be successful that John has—that needs to die. We sentence it to death so he'll learn to trust in God rather than himself."

Some of us have areas in our lives in which we were once very successful and competent, but since becoming a Christian, that ability seemed to die. No matter how you worked, it never would come out right. Don't despair, friend. That's normal. That's just an area of your life where you've got the sentence of death. The Lord has sentenced that area to die. And when He's passed judgment, believe me, it's going to die.

WHAT NOT TO DO

In light of all of this, how should we react to trials? I'm going to give you three things you should never do and five things you should always do.

1. Never charge God with being evil.

Don't ever come out with a railing accusation against God. Personally, when I see hardships coming, I try to bow my spirit and say, "Lord, whatever this is, I ask You to give me the ability to go through it as Your child. I'm not going to fight or kick. Help me go through it gracefully, and may there be no anger or hate come up in me toward You." We all know it is possible to come out against God when things continually don't go the way you want them to, don't we?

When Job first came under persecution, the Scripture says that he didn't sin with his mouth or come out in any way against God. But by the tenth chapter he was saying things like: "Why don't You just pour me out like milk? Am I cheese that You want to curdle me? Why don't You just go ahead and kill me? It would be better if I was never even born!"

We see God's response to that in Job 40:1–5:

Then the Lord answered Job and said,
Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty?
Let him who reproves God answer it.

Job's problem was finding fault with God and reproving Him. "Lord, You ought to be doing something about this. I'm standing on the precious promises. I've done all I can: I pled the blood, I fasted—now You get with it!"

When God challenged Job, this was Job's reply:

Then Job answered the Lord and said,
Behold, I am insignificant; What can I reply to Thee? I lay my hand on my mouth.

Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add no more (NAS).

Do you know what he was saying? "I'm putting my hand to my mouth. From now on my lips are sealed. I'm going to take it patiently. I'm going to endure. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Never charge God with being unjust.

2. Never assume that what's happening to you is particular to you and that no one else ever goes through it.

"All the angels and the devil got together and plotted against poor little old *me*! This couldn't ever happen to anybody else. Nobody else has to go through what I'm going through!"

It's just not that way. Anything you could possibly experience is a common, regular, everyday trial. Even though it's humbling to know that whatever you're going through is common, just move on through it without taking the attitude that it is exclusive to you or your family.

3. Never expect to reign and rule with Christ unless you go through persecution.

So many people believe that you just ask Jesus into your heart and claim all the promises, never experiencing any pain or any problem, and then you reign and rule with Christ. I'm sorry, but that's *just not so*. You won't be fit to reign and rule with Him unless you have a proven character. Now, I'm not talking here about going to heaven when you die. I'm talking about reigning and ruling with Christ in the thousand-year reign. Paul said:

that I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death [why?];
in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10–11, NAS).

Even Paul did not automatically assume that he was going to attain to the resurrection of the dead. He said, "I pray I'll be worthy of the first resurrection. In order to be worthy of that, I'm willing to go through suffering. I have to be conformed to His death." If Paul never assumed that his part in reigning and ruling with Christ would be automatic, neither should we.

FIVE THINGS TO ALWAYS DO

Here are five things we should always do.

1. Have an unqualified, sold-out commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see this in Barnabas' exhortation to the Christians at Antioch:

Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord (Acts 11:23, NAS).

One of the main things he told them was, "Remain true to the Lord." All of us should always make sure that our eye is single toward Him. Make up your mind that nothing can ever get in your way of serving Him and that you'll be completely sold out to Him. No matter what, decide to remain true to the Lord.

2. Be convinced in your heart that absolutely nothing can separate you from the love of God.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God,

which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35, 38–39, NAS).

No matter what you're going through, remember He loves you. Never say, "God has forsaken me. He doesn't love me anymore. If He loved me, He would be doing differently." Make up your mind never to say that, because no matter what you're going through, nothing can possibly separate you from the love of God.

3. Make up your mind that you're always going to be more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ who loves you.

Do you know what it means to be more than a conqueror? It's when you encounter every single trial, tribulation or suffering, and come out of it with more than you went in with. That's what it is to be more than a conqueror. You don't simply "overcome," but you overcome and come out with *spoils*.

4. In any trial, make it a point to look into the unseen, eternal realm, rather than the visible, temporal realm.

If you do that, your affliction will work an eternal weight of glory for you.

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

while 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 (2 Cor. 4:16–18, NAS).

When you're going through something, simply make up your mind not to look at the circumstance. Instead, cast an eye toward heaven and the Lord, believing and knowing that as you go through that trial, it's proving

(continued on page 30)

BIBLE STUDY ANSWERS

(From page 15)

1. yea, amen; 2. Tribulation; 3. persecuted, you; 4. a. the Father; 5. An example; 6. No; 7. Spirit of glory and of God; 8. Rejoice; 9. That we might comfort others; 10. abound, consolation, abounds; 11. A. No; B. Asia; C. Sentence of death; D. That they would learn to trust God; 12. Christ; 13. Faith & patience; 14. God, worthy, Kingdom; 15. A. Murder; B. Theft; C. Doing evil; D. Being a busybody; 16. commit, soul, faithful; 17. Christ, Head, all, Church; 18. Ten; 19. Crown of life; 20. A. The Lord; B. No; C. Because God holds his hand; 21. C. Overwork.

INTERCESSORS REPORT

The second half of an interview with Ern Baxter and Derek Prince by John Beckett.

Q To continue our interview, I want to ask both of you a rather broad question. What do you feel are the most critical issues facing America today?

A (Ern) I'm going to answer that by making comparisons to other nations in which I have traveled recently. What we are seeing on a broad scale is that legitimate authority is breaking down in every area—the juridical area, the judicial area, the economic area, and the governmental area, in which the wrong people are getting into places of power with wrong motivation. It's almost like everything is out of adjustment, and nations are on the verge of collapse, on the verge of having to submit to violent minorities because the majority doesn't have the moral power to withstand.

From the results which I've seen in other nations—some of which have collapsed and others which are close to it—I see the same possibility in America if it is not dealt with. I would hope that here in America we can meet some of these eventualities not only by prayer, but by a ministry intelligently outlining God's order of government for people.

(Derek) I agree with what Ern is saying and I think in a certain sense it could be summed up in the phrase, "the maintenance of proper authority." I believe that in the United States, probably the greatest threat in the long run to authority is the threat to the authority in the home. One of the most desperate needs of this nation is to re-establish and maintain the authority of parents, and *primarily* the father's authority in his house.

The other area that I'm concerned about personally is the conduct of the United States towards Israel. I believe that it would be disastrous for this nation to become in any way unjust or anti-Semitic or to fail in its obligations towards Israel.

Q We encounter a great deal of fatalism in the churches today—the idea that things are destined to get progressively worse as we approach the Lord's return. How is this attitude of resignation most effectively countered among Christians?

A (Derek) I would say it's most effectively countered by more thorough teaching of what the Bible has to say about the closing period. The essence of what the Bible says can be summed up in Revelation 22:11,

"He that is unrighteous, let him be still more unrighteous; he that is wicked, let him be still more wicked. He that is righteous, let him be still more righteous. He that is holy, let him be still more holy."

In other words, we've come to the parting of the ways. The wicked are getting more wicked, but at the same time, the righteous are getting more righteous.

But to emphasize and focus on the darkness is foolishness. It is really a lack of balance and correct understanding. Such an emphasis has a very depressing and enervating effect on Christian faith and activity. I think we need to bear in mind that in the last resort, light always has pre-eminence over darkness.

(Ern) Since you're zeroing in specifically here on the churches and on Christian people, I will confine my observations to that. There are two things in the Word of God that must be kept in balance if we're going to maintain the proper attitude: the *Word* and the *Spirit*. Much of the pessimism, as Derek has said, comes from lack of teaching or unbalanced teaching.

Also, the lives of many Christians are devoid of the Spirit. Paul spoke about people who had a form of godliness but denied the power. Paul didn't say the form was wrong, but that a form without content was wrong.

It says in the Gospel of John, "The light shines in darkness, the darkness cannot resist it." The ultimate triumph of light is as inevitable as the character of God. In my experience, when these things are taught, many Christians who have been pessimistic start to emerge out of their negativism. They start to hear the Word of God's optimism. Faith cometh by hearing, hearing comes by the Word of God. God said that when we latch onto God's encouragement and also get the dynamic of His Spirit, this is the antidote to pessimism.

Q What specific counsel would you offer the Christian who is burdened for our nation and the Church and wishes to become an effective intercessor?

A (Ern) Your question carries in it something that distresses me. You say, "What is the Christian to do?" This has for so long been our context of thinking. We think of the Christian, rather than the Christian *community*. When you look in the New Testament, you find it is concerned with Christians (plural). I understand your question because I'm meeting all kinds of isolated men and women who are deeply concerned. But I think that they should try to find somebody to pray with, becoming

part of a praying community. There is something powerful about a symphony in prayer where two or three agree.

Your question raises the whole tragedy of the Church's impotence, in the fact that the redeemed community is not fulfilling one of its basic functions. When the Bible describes the church in Jerusalem in its pristine glory, in Acts 2:4, it says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship [koinonia], and in breaking of bread and in prayers." Prayer was a community thing. We've got to let the Church see that it is through their corporate community praying that they are literally going to govern world situations.

But back to your individual; I doubt if he can carry this kind of prayer burden alone. I doubt if he's intended to. God doesn't set the solitary alone, He sets them in families and surely they will find one or two others with a like mind, and together they can be the beginning of a prayer community.



As a final question, what do you feel should be our priorities in prayer?



(Derek) I think the effective kind of prayer is that which finds out what God is saying and desiring to do, and invites Him to do it. To me, that is the model prayer. "Do as thou hast said" (1 Chron. 17:23).

In talking about God's priorities, I would say we might begin with the Church. I think we should pray for the Church to be cleansed, to be reunited, to be empowered and that the right kind of leadership be raised up.

Then we need to pray for God's Kingdom to come to the nations of the earth. One major means that God uses is to raise up the right kind of leaders and put them in

(Growing through Adversity continued from page 28)

God's character in you, accumulating an eternal weight of glory.

5. Always rejoice in the Lord.

Whenever you come into problems, rejoice in Him. You may even want to dance before the Lord. But whatever you do, embrace the suffering with joy. It's not easy, but it's scriptural to praise and rejoice in the Lord and dance in the Lord when you see affliction on the way.

In closing I'd like to share a statement by Andrew Murray about facing hardship:

First of all, God brought me here. It is by His will that I'm in this strait place. In this fact, I will rest.

Next, He will keep me here in His love and give me grace to behave as His child.

Then He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me

the right places. With regard to the United States, I feel God has lifted His hand of judgment for the time being. We have asked Him for mercy and grace, and I believe He has granted it to us. So now I pray that His grace will turn to His glory and I pray specifically for such a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit on this nation that every stronghold of Satan will be broken down and Jesus Christ alone will be uplifted.

(Ern) I would only add to that the mandate of 1 Tim. 2—the apostolic command given to a redeemed community that understands its responsibility in corporate prayer. We're told to pray for all men everywhere—kings, governors, those in authority over us—that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness—for God would have all men to be saved. The prayer for all men is not for better economic conditions or better living conditions, but put in context, our prayer creates an atmosphere in which the gospel of redemption can be preached and the Lordship of Christ realized.

This prayer should not only be directed at our own sphere—the place where God has put us—but should also encompass God's world vision.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." We've got to stretch our minds to believe that God is interested in the world, praying for all men everywhere. 🙏

Day of Prayer and Fasting

At the Chicago Summit Conference in September 1975, national Christian leaders established the first Friday of each month as a day of united prayer and fasting for all Christians in America.

As a reminder to those who participate in this day of prayer and fasting, we want to point out that the day set aside this month is: **February 3.**

the lessons He intends me to learn and working in me the grace He means to bestow.

Last, in His good time, He will bring me out again. How and when He knows.

So, I am here by God's appointment, in His keeping, under His training, for His time.

I pray that all of us as God's people would be able to say with Paul, "I will not boast in anything save the cross of Christ, by which I am crucified to the world," and that the Lord Jesus Christ would give us the ability to go through tribulations with perseverance, patience and endurance, forming in us that proven character by which we will reign and rule with Him. 🙏

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