

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## The Christian and Suffering

By Tanner Bass

Pain, suffering, and afflictions are not a possibility in this life—they are inevitable and inescapable. We are told throughout the Scriptures in numerous places that children of God are to endure afflictions, and endure through various trials and pains that will come (2 Tim 2:3-12; 2 Cor. 1:3-8; Rom. 8:18-28; 1 Thess. 1:4; James 1:12). For some, the idea that a child of God will suffer and will feel pain in their life seems unfair, undeserving, or simply unjust. They can understand why a non-Christian would suffer and experience pain, but they themselves? A child of God? A Christian? “That is just not fair,” some might say. It has been falsely understood before that the words ‘*Christian*’ and ‘*Suffering*’ do not go together.

We will see, however, that they do go together. Very well, in fact.

Paul, in Acts 14:22, had been preaching the gospel and was “*strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’*” From the first century churches, we can see Paul’s message of exhortation through the many tribulations of life. Those who were children of God dating back 2000 years endured pain and suffering, including physical suffering, just as we do today. Christians are called to be different, and as a byproduct of this, we are told we will be hated by the world “*for My name’s sake*” (Matt. 10:22; Mk. 13:13). Rather than counting this persecution as suffering, let us rejoice in the moments of trial and pain, “*knowing that the testing of [our] faith produces patience*” (Jas. 1:2-3).

Looking at Christ as our ultimate example in all things, can we not clearly identify the pain and suffering He underwent while He lived here on earth? He, of all people could rightly say that He was undeserving of experiencing such pain, agony, and suffering. After all, He is the Son of God and “*without sin*” (Heb. 4:15)! But, we know He did so willingly for you and me, as He looked to the Father for support, guidance, comfort, and truth (1 Pet. 2:21-25; Matt. 4:1-11; 26:39). Let us also have this mindset that Christ had, for He is *our “example, that [we] should follow in His steps”* (1 Pet. 2:21; Heb. 12:2). When we endure hardships, and temporary pain and suffering, let us also look unto the Father and His Holy Scriptures as Christ did, and, humble ourselves as He did.

In 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, Paul said, “*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.*” The persecution and suffering we may endure will not destroy us, contingent that we are proceeding through prayer, relying wholeheartedly on the Lord, and following in His footsteps as He has commanded. 2 Corinthians 1:4 also says that God “*comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*” As Christians, we have a duty to help other Christians endure hardships.

Paul summed up this topic well in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, “*This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*” Through the inevitable hardships, pain, and sufferings that happen in life, let us look unto the things unseen, for they are eternal, and they help us endure! — *The Spirit’s Sword*, July 16, 2017. ■

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“...in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation...”

By Bill Hall

“*Do all things without murmurings and questions; that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world*” (Phil. 2:14, 15).

The Philippian Christians had to serve God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. They were neither the first nor the last to find themselves under such circumstances. In fact, every person who ever served God did so ***“in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,”*** and so must we.

Surely no-one would question the perverseness of the generation in which we live. We are surrounded by indecency. Moral filth lines the shelves of the neighborhood store and video shop. Drug scandals rock the sports and entertainment worlds. Christians working in factories are exposed to bad language, filthy stories, and rumors of immorality among their fellow employees. Our children attend schools that are filled with wickedness. We are not overstating the case — this is the world as it really is, a crooked and perverse generation indeed.

We face two possible choices as Christians: (1) try to clean up the society in which we live, so that we and our children can serve God without the pressures and evil influences that presently exist. We would not discourage reasonable effort on the part of individual Christians along these lines, but success in any such efforts will be on a small scale. It matters not how hard we work at it, by and large, the world will still be a corrupt world when we die: evil will still exist on TV and in the movies; pornography will still be a problem; corruption will still exist in government; and schools will still have their ungodly influences. Our purpose as Christians is to call people out of darkness through the gospel and into light. We can do that, but efforts to eradicate darkness will for the most part be futile. Fortunately, we have another choice: (2) make up our minds to serve God faithfully in whatever environment we find ourselves. This is the only viable choice for the Christian.

It can be done. Consider Noah’s generation when ***“every imagination of the thoughts of (man's) heart was only evil continually”*** (Gen. 6:5); or Lot’s generation when ten righteous souls could not be found in all of Sodom; or Elijah’s generation when wicked Ahab served as king in the wicked nation of Israel; or Daniel’s generation when as a young man he found himself in a foreign land facing pressures to eat the king’s meats and drink his wines (Dan. 1:8); or the apostles’ generation when Rome ruled the world and the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees dominated the religious scene.

What were these men doing in such crooked and perverse circumstances? They were serving God! That’s what they were doing! The point is this: if these could serve God in the midst of the crooked and perverse circumstances in which they found themselves, and if the Philippians could shine ***“as lights in the world”*** in the midst of their crooked and perverse generation, so can we. Our eternal destiny is not determined by the environment in which we live, but by our own determination to be what we ought to be in whatever environment we find ourselves.

We must lay aside our excuses, both for ourselves and our children, and make up our minds to say with Joshua, ***“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”*** (Josh. 24:15). This we shall do, and with God’s help we shall overcome. ■

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## Modest Apparel

By Joe R. Price

***“8 I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; 9 in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, 10 but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works”*** (1 Tim. 2:8–10, NKJV).

Faithful men of moral purity and holiness are to lead public prayer. Likewise, women are to clothe themselves modestly. The godly woman’s attire is dictated by her sense of shame that is rooted fast in her character. With decency she exercises sound judgment and self-control. She adorns herself consistently with her profession of faith. She retains her ability to blush, ashamed to uncover her nakedness. Her clothing is consistent with her profession of good works. She wears a full complement of clothing that avoids extravagant displays that emphasize the appeal of the flesh (1 Pet. 3:3-4). In an age when popular culture sexualizes the appearance of men and women, godly women (and godly men, for that matter) will continue to clothe themselves modestly, for honoring God is their first priority. To do less shamefully exposes not only a person’s body, but also a heart that is not ashamed of that which is shameful (Jer. 8:12). – ***Sword Tips***, July 29, 2015. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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