

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## The Beneficial Effects of Suffering and Persecution

By Jim McDonald

Acts 3-4 records the beginning that Satan brought upon Jerusalem disciples: the imprisonment of two apostles at the hands of the chief rulers and Sadducees. The persecution was mild compared with the increased intensity brethren would suffer, and this beginning was a stark reminder of Jesus' warning to His apostles: ***“But take ye heed to yourselves for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in synagogues shall ye be beaten; and before governors and kings shall ye stand for my sake, for a testimony unto them”*** (Mk.3:9).

The steadfastness of Peter and John in the face of the demands the authorities made that they cease preaching in the name of Jesus brought stronger and stiffer punishment to them and ultimately to the whole body of Christians. Of these troubling times the Hebrew writer wrote, ***“But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were enlightened, ye endured a conflict of suffering, partly being made a gazing stock both by reproach and affliction; and partly, becoming partakers with them that were so used. For ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions knowing that ye have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one”*** (Heb. 10:32-34). But if the actions of the apostles brought even more severe efforts by the authorities to make them cease preaching about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they brought also a possible, good effect upon believers. Luke wrote, ***“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul and not one of them said that aught of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all”*** (Act 4:32).

These believers were united in a common cause: all were committed to it. There was a unity among these early believers, the kind of unity for which Jesus had prayed to the Father (Jn. 17:20-21), a unity which is seldom seen. The suffering the apostles experienced – and would soon experience again – brought determination to the party of believers to uphold the apostles in their suffering, to imitate the same conviction that they manifested as though joined by an invisible bond.

Such harmony and unity manifested itself in the care believers had for each other. ***“Not one of them said that aught of the things he possessed was his own.”*** They sold their possessions, put all proceeds under the apostle's care, they had ***“all things common.”*** The deep conviction in the apostle's message that Jesus had been raised from the dead, coupled with God's bearing witness to that truth by the miracles He wrought through them, gave the disciples assurance that any sacrifice they made was little to be compared with the blessing that would be theirs at their own resurrection, and made them determined to share that message with others. These disciples had ***“joy and peace in believing”*** (Rom. 15:13). No one should be surprised that Luke further wrote, ***“And great grace was upon them all”*** (Acts 4:32).

Just as the apostle's steadfastness had strengthened the disciples to imitate the apostle's convictions, so the disciple's steadfastness in their own conviction had a great power over others. A bit later, when the unity and well-being of all these disciple's convictions would be tested by the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira for lying, their faith held strong and ***“believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women”*** (Acts 5:14).

We could wish for the same attitudes of believers toward the resurrection message, for the care one for another and the unity present then among believers. But should we wish for such, it would be well to remember what happened to bring about such a spirit among those believers. While we could wish for the results among believers, could we wish for the tribulations which brought about that spirit?

Who wants to suffer persecution, imprisonment, or even death for Jesus? Yet, if we must either suffer those things or deny Jesus there is only one option for us if we wish to go to heaven. Few of us wish for those things, but remember that “every cloud has a silver lining” and should such come our way, there will be blessings to come as well.

Suffering for Christ can do some things for believers that few other things can do. It can give us serenity, hope, joy, and even peace. It did for these early disciples. It can do the same for us. ■

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## The Seed Principal

By Jesse Flowers

What is the seed principle? It simply means that seed will always produce after its own kind. An apple seed will always produce an apple. A watermelon seed will always produce a watermelon, etc. From the very beginning, God created it to be this way.

***“Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth’; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good”*** (Gen. 1:11-12).

The same seed principle also applies in the religious realm. In explaining the parable of the sower, Jesus said in Luke 8:11, ***“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.”*** The word of God is compared to seed sown in the hearts of men. Some will receive it with a honest and good heart, many others will not (vv. 12-15).

The apostle Peter wrote: ***“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever”*** (1 Pet. 1:22-23).

Peter said that sinners are ***“born again”*** of incorruptible SEED, the word of God. When men obey the gospel of Christ they receive salvation (Rom. 1:16; Mk. 16:15-16). In the first century, whenever the gospel (seed) was preached and obeyed, it produced a Christian (Acts 11:26). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, whenever the gospel (seed) is preached and obeyed, it will produce a Christian.

Here’s the point. If I teach someone from the Book of Mormon and they accept that message, they will become a Mormon convert. If I teach someone the Roman Catholic Catechism and they accept its teachings, they will become a Roman Catholic. The Methodist Discipline will produce a Methodist. The Baptist Manual will produce a Baptist. Etc.

However, if we will simply teach someone the pure, unadulterated word of God, it will produce a New Testament Christian every time (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22:18-19). Nothing more, nothing less. Why? Because of the seed principle. Seed only yields fruit according to its kind.

What ***“seed”*** was planted into your heart? Make sure it was the word of God and not the word of men. As James penned: ***“receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls”*** (1:21). ■

***“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building”*** (1 Cor. 3:5-9).

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

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