

Bearing up to Persecution

Issue date: 26 Aug 2007

You save up for a long time and now the day arrives when you now have enough money to buy this thing that you have set your mind upon. It will help you and the family - a food processor! It is guaranteed to do all the things that the manual states.

You plug it in and it does not work!

All that potential and it just does not work!

Perhaps it just has not been tested or inspected.

Clearly the testing of items could be extended to the testing of ourselves.

Phil 1v37 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

This teaching shows that we are being tested (rather assayed) to find out what we are like inside. There are lots of different types of persecution and testing.

In Mozambique a torture practiced upon some Christians was to hold them in a 'crucifix like' manor with cord around the fingers. The arms swelled so badly that it was fifteen days before the recipients could even hold a pen!

James 5v17 Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves....

Luke 19v12-27 He who is faithful in something, more will be given, because he will be given something greater.

2Tim 3v12 Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Jesus Christ will be persecuted.

3v1 But understand this that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money.....

3v11 What befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from all the Lord rescued me.

How much suffering can we take before God?

People who have faith/fidelity/assurance are much stronger in facing adversity than those who have no faith. For example hostages are able to call upon their Christian beliefs to give inner mental strength, while the non-Christians would become more mentally depressed, haggard and drawn.

Other forms of persecution may be very mild, but if relentless then they too, can drag a person down.

One example would be water running over granite. We all know that over many years the relentless water will wear the rock away.

Another example would be the statue of St Peter located in Rome. This statue has no toe because it has been eroded away by people kissing it!

Jesus Christ would go to a quiet place to meditate with God. This would rejuvenate him, mentally.

Should we only worship God when the 'going is good' and then stop when it gets rough?

No clearly not.

This is what Satan said to God before the testing of Job. Job showed the true actions that we must all take.

Trust and rely totally on our Creator God, acknowledge Him in all things, not only when the times are good!

Mark 10.29-30 Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house, or family, , who will not receive a hundredfold,..... with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

If we should be weak, but however if this causes us to turn upon God for support, then good has resulted!

This could be extended so that the stronger the pain of external persecution (generally from religious leaders who have been exposed – as John's Gospel chapters 13 to 17 tell us), then the closer we draw to God, knowing that our faith/fidelity/assurance in God will ensure that we are not tested beyond our limits. Because Yahweh does not desire to have a servant damaged because that will not serve Yahweh's ultimate Desire in spreading His Word.

Paul, in his youth, was relentless but misguided, until he was shown the correct way by God via Jesus.

2Cor 12.1-7 Paul writes down here how he sees supernatural visions of the future.

If that happened to us then perhaps we would elevate ourselves, this might have happened to Paul, but he says that I have a 'thorn of the flesh'. This may have been his eye sight which may have been permanently damaged during his supernatural vision - we do not know.

2Cor 12.8 my power has been made perfect in thy weakness (*parallels with Jesus Christ fulfilling God's plan*).

When he had God's power within him he felt powerful.

Eph 4.26 Become angry but do not sin. Do not loose self-control. Conquer evil through actions.

It is good to have a friend who has experienced such things and succeeded, so that you may gain support and encouragement from them.

Heb 12.2-3 looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith/fidelity/assurance, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. It is like an equation, if you do something on one side then to make it balance something has to happen on the other side.

You have hardships on one side, then faith becomes stronger on the other side to still keep the scales balanced. Hence more hardships on one side, more faith on the other.

This is like:-

Amount of hardship: willingness to endure hardship.

Essentially you do not want faith/fidelity/assurance, if you do not want hardship (because that is what The Bible promises will befall those who accurately serve and thus fulfil Yahweh's Desire of them).

It is the refining spoken of in many places within The Bible. The heat from the fire would be our trials and tribulations, but from that we become like refined Gold!

Matt 16.24 If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

We must make adjustments in life. This may be reducing one's standard of living so that we are able to keep the faith. Early True Christians were forced to loose their life in many instances!

1Cor 4.10-13 We are fools in Christ, but in Christ's sake we are wise! We are weak, but you are strong. We have become, and are now, as the refuse and scum of the world.

These people become strong in faith when they see how apparently weak people (apostles) survive the onslaught of the world.

Rom 8.35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

We see here how:-

His love towards us will never be shaken.

Our love towards Him may be shaken – that is the difference!

If there was an approaching storm, where would you go for a place of protection?

Clearly it has to be to God through Jesus Christ.

This approaching storm is to be The Great Tribulation.

1Pet. 5.8 Satan roars like a lion.

What can we do and require to protect ourselves?

We need to become like a spiritual squirrel! Gather all the nuts (spiritual knowledge) when one can, store them (in the brain) so that one can call upon them in times of famine (times of trouble).

Could you **now** make a mini Bible by recalling what is within your brain?

What can you remember of it now?

James 1.2-4 Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith/fidelity/assurance produces steadfastness.

Give patience a chance to grow, do not squirm but let it become stronger while you face the trials and tribulations.

James 1.12 Happy is the man that keeps on enduring trial, because on becoming approved he will receive the crown of life, which God promised to those who continue loving him.

1Pet 5.10 But after you have suffered a little while (*so it will soon be over*). He will make you firm, He will make you strong by bearing up to persecution.

It is this strength that will carry us forward through our persecution into Jesus' New Kingdom of The Millennium.