

THINK IT NOT STRANGE.

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." 1 Pet. 4:12,13.

Notwithstanding this exhortation very many of the beloved of the Lord do think it "*strange*" when the fiery trials strike them, doubtless because they do not appreciate the Lord's design. Let us look at it together.

While we understand from Scripture that present evil in general, shall ultimately be over-ruled of God and made to minister good, yet we are far from thinking that "all's for the best," or that every thing which occurs in the world was foreordained of God and brought about by Him. No we must remember that since the "fall," the Eden paradise with its perfection and blessings suited to the perfect man have been done away, and the sin-cursed race has been condemned to the as yet unfinished and imperfect earth [The garden of Eden was a little spot finished beforehand, in order to provide a perfect trial to the perfect man Adam]. By the time man has been perfectly restored to manhood as represented in Adam, his home, the earth also shall have reached its perfection as represented in Eden. Meanwhile, the turbulence of nature, cyclones, earthquakes, etc., incident to the *unfinished* work, continue, and constitute part of the evil to which the entire race became subject through the sin of their representative Adam, and from which it has been redeemed and will shortly be released by their second representative, Jesus.

But, in all this confusion of nature, Scripture teaches us that one class is under special supervision and to these nothing out of God's order could happen. This is the consecrated class, the members of the

Anointed body – Christ. *We know* that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the *called according to His purpose.*" Rom. 8:28. [R738 : page 8]

As it was with the nation of Israel in type, so it is with the Royal Priesthood, the holy nation of believers now, and so it shall be with the *world* in the coming age. Israel had as many captivities [R739 : page 8] and famines, etc., probably as other nations, but none of them were by accident; each was a chastisement, and they are so explained in Scripture. So now, many are the scourgings which the spiritual sons of God receive *in order* that they may not be condemned with the world. (1 Cor. 11:32.) And though no chastisement for the time seemeth joyous but grievous, nevertheless God knows and we are learning the peaceable FRUITS of righteousness which this pruning produces in those who are rightly exercised thereby.

While it should be a cause of sorrow to us, that we need special chastisement to recall us to duty, yet we must remember that it is an evidence that we are still reckoned of God as among His sons, and such chastisements then are evidences of His love and his desire to have us make our calling and election sure, to the grand prize to run for which we consecrated. In view of this, if you receive such chastisements and correction, think it not STRANGE.

But while such trials should not be thought strange the apostle Peter in the above statement evidently meant more than this, as expressed in the words "But rejoice inasmuch as ye are *partakers of Christ's sufferings.*" Christ did not suffer because of disloyalty or failure to keep his covenant. He did not suffer because of spiritual drowsiness and conformity to the world. He did not suffer because of *self*-will leading him to ignore the Father's will and word; nor because of a plan of his own which must needs be dashed to pieces. No, the sufferings of Christ were from no such causes. Hence to the extent that we share His sufferings, it must be not as chastisement for evil, nor in the renouncing of evil, but a suffering *wrongfully* –

undeservedly. His was a suffering for *well doing* and for the truths' sake, and to be sharers or partakers of this suffering, on account of which we may *rejoice* and anticipate coming glory, we must take heed to the cause of the suffering. We only deceive ourselves if we count sufferings for sin as part of the sufferings for Christ, and on that account expect the glory to be revealed.

We are well aware that this is "a hard saying", and that many will not let themselves believe it. The terms "sufferings of Christ" and "sacrifice" have long been misused. Many reckon themselves as *sacrificers* with Christ, because they have abandoned some practice which they considered evil, such as profanity, the use of stimulants or jewelry, or extravagant dressing, or dancing, etc., etc. If these things are *wrong*, you never had a right to them, hence it could not be a "sacrifice" with Christ to discontinue anything you believe to be *wrong* in and of itself.

What then were the sufferings of Christ which we may endure that are of the same kind?

The word Christ signifies anointed, and hence those sufferings could not have commenced with Jesus, before his anointing of the spirit after John had immersed him in the water, in emblem of his consecration to death. So too with us; none of us could share in the sufferings of the anointed, unless we had first consecrated and become members of the anointed (ecclesia) company.

The sacrifice and sufferings of Christ Jesus, included every item of mental and physical pain and self-denial experienced as a **RESULT of his consecration**, until it was complete in death. It therefore included the denial of all laudable and proper human ambitions which Jesus as a *perfect* man must have experienced more than imperfect men, as well as the reproach which he bore from his fellow-men for the sake of truth, especially from the teachers of the nominal church of his day. It included also his weariness and exhaustion caused not only by preaching, but through giving off his

own vital energy for the good of others in healing the sick, etc. See Mark 5:30.

So too are the sufferings of Christ which we may well rejoice to have shared, when the time comes that "the glory shall be revealed." They start from the hour of consecration, and if faithful, end only in death. With us as with our Head and pattern, the *sacrifice* consists in denying ourselves things which are lawful and proper, in our endeavors to honor God, promote truth and do good in any way to any in need, especially to them of the household of faith. And apparently most of the "body like their 'Head'" will spend more of their sacrificed time and substance in supplying spiritual than physical wants of men, though the latter should not be neglected as we "have *opportunity*."

You were ambitious in the exercise of legitimate business talent, but your consecration demanded time and thought for the careful study of God's word that you might know Him and His will concerning you, and that you might "*communicate*" the same to others. Your business ambition had to be curbed; your time and talent were no longer yours, but consecrated, hence though business was still needful it became secondary, and henceforth your "Father's business" was *first* and your former ambitions restricted to necessity and to the promotion of the "Father's business."

You had taken great pleasure in making home *elegant*, in dressing self and family in *elegance*, and you said it was right because you had gotten the money righteously, and you felt sure that God loved beautiful things, and that His heavenly home and family are *elegant*; but now with time and money and all consecrated, you realize something of the pleasure of sacrificing with Christ by denying yourself such luxuries, and restricting your outlay of the Lord's time and money to the providing of things *needful and decent*.

You were fond of company and passed many a pleasant, social hour in "Music," "Social chat," "Harmless dancing" and "Innocent amusements and games." Now, while *not condemning these innocent*

recreations in the world, your covenant of sacrifice with Christ demands that your time, money and influence formerly thus used, except so much as may come within the range of necessities or emergencies, shall be faithfully accounted for to God, your rights and privileges in these things sacrificed, and the time, money, and influence *used* according to your consecration, in God's service.

You used to take a lively interest in "Politics," "The Temperance question," "The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Association," "The National Peace Congress Society," "The Prison Reform Association," "Labor Unions," etc., etc. Many an hour, many a dollar, and the full weight of your influence, you gave to such objects, and *still*, believe it well spent in an endeavor to do good. But *now* you find that your consecration compels a different course, and these which were *your own* will and plans for doing good must be sacrificed to God's plans, and you must follow the Leader.

As you mark carefully His course, you perceive that he, though in sympathy with every moral reform, used his time and influence wholly in preaching the glad tidings. And as you came more fully to appreciate the Lord's plan, you realized that the moral reforms could and would be carried forward by the kind and benevolent of this world, just as well without you, but could never reach perfection until God's kingdom shall obtain control. *Then* you realized as you had not done at first, the necessity of the work which you should be engaged in: that the preaching of the "good-tidings of good" things coming, was God's method of developing you as well as others for a share in that great and *successful* Moral Reform which shall obtain throughout the world when the rightful King and his Bride are enthroned in glory and power.

You not only used to love to do generously, "giving to everything" and "speaking favorably of all," but you also appreciated highly the good will and favor of all toward you. This showed a good spirit and a broad heart, and none can help admiring such. And such admiration is very sweet always. We may know that the perfect man Jesus would

have *enjoyed* doing just so. But under his covenant of sacrifice he must and did deny himself this enjoyment. He must and did rebuke sin, error and hypocrisy and thus *forfeited* (sacrificed) the good opinion and admiration of the nominal Church of his day. Instead of quietly letting the Scribes and Pharisees alone, he must and did sacrifice his inclination for peace in order to *advance the* TRUTH, honor God, and bless the people. So you found it: You could no longer give to everything; by your covenant and sacrifice with Christ, you had *already given* ALL YOU HAD – to God, and now you are merely God's agent or steward and you can give nothing now, without consulting his directions, and ascertaining whether it will go to advance truth or error. You no longer have an option or choice, and of course some who once thought you "whole-hearted and generous" will now consider you "narrow-minded and bigoted."

The same will apply to your treatment of doctrinal matters. Once you carelessly and ignorantly, though benevolently, supposed that all denominations of Christians believed alike, and took so many different routes to heaven appointed by God, so that each person might have a choice of *form* of worship, and your friends called you a broad-minded Christian. But after your consecration had led you to a study of God's plans in his Word you perceived your mistake. You had never in the full sense been a Christian before, and now you find that there are many doctrines of all denominations contrary to God's revealed purpose. You thus began to be what the world calls "narrow-minded," and were obliged to oppose certain systems as well as doctrines, and finally with a further search of your Father's plans you found that the systems calling themselves "*Churches*" and laying down rules and doctrines for faith and practice *are* ALL of them mere human arrangements and *their* doctrines self-arranged and self-binding, a mixture of truth and falsehood blinding and confusing both to saint and sinner. When you found that the Church mentioned by Jesus and his apostles was not one of these man-made systems nor [R740 : page 8] yet all of them together, but that the class who, having consecrated to God, were accepted through the Redeemer and had *their names written in*

heaven, then came a fresh trial upon you. Would you or would you not, *sacrifice* your honor and standing and "good name" and "broad-minded" reputation, for the TRUTH?

That was one of the severest of all *your* SUFFERINGS, yet you said with the Master: "Father, glorify thy name"; and as you saw the counterpart of this in the Lord's sacrifice, you heard him say: "It is sufficient that the servant should be as his Lord." It has occurred to you as I forewarned you: When they shall say all manner of evil against you *falsely* [and often ignorantly] for my sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. In your rejoicing now you no longer think "strange" of the fiery trials that encompass you. Hereafter let us more and more rejoice in such sufferings – rejoicing that we are counted WORTHY to suffer for Christ's name.

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