

Tribulation Yields
the Peaceable Fruit of Righteousness
Hebrews 12:7-13, Trinity Sunday XXIII
October 26, 2008

Beloved of the Lord....."On the 8th of August, 1529, Luther with his wife, lay sick of a fever. Overwhelmed with dysentery, sciatica, and a dozen other maladies, he said: God has touched me sorely, and I have been impatient: but God knows better than we whereto it serves. Our Lord God is like a printer, who sets the letters backwards, so that here we must so read them; when we are printed off, yonder, in the life to come, we shall read all clear and straightforward. Meantime we must have patience. Tribulation is a right school and exercise of flesh and blood." (Luther's Table Talk, 1952)

Luther was right, for when we are chastened it doesn't seem to be a joyous or happy occasion. The letters that God has written for us in life do indeed appear backward. When tried, our old Adam quickly accuses God of various crimes and evils. Above all things we ask the question, "Why has God allowed this to happen to me if He loves me?" The simplest answer is: your tribulation dear Christian is a sure and certain sign that God does indeed love you, for if He didn't chasten you at all it would be a sure sign He has no love for you. Be therefore comforted in your tribulation, for not only is it a sure sign of God's love, but through this means God will teach you to rely solely on His grace and tender mercies. Those who endure to the end, the same shall be saved.

Let us therefore ENDURE CHASTENING. We are not to give up or throw in the towel, for that is to fall away in time of temptation. We know God will give us the strength to endure. When tried, we spiritually endure by faith, by trust in our heart that the infinite love and mercy of God are behind our trials and tribulations. "For whom the Lord LOVETH, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." God's chastening of His children on earth is not punishment for sin in the proper sense. True punishment for sin is eternal hell. Besides, Jesus already made our sins His own, and then paid for them all with His own blood. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." How can God punish those He's already forgiven? God's chastening then is a fatherly correction, and exercise of faith which may hurt our body, but not our soul. As a lamb He may break our leg, but then He carries us upon His shoulders. Moses wrote, "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God." Ex. 15:2 David wrote, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Ps. 73 When we are chastened we learn to say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Truly the chastening of the Lord is a sure sign that we are sons of God, children of the Most High. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with a son; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" A good father disciplines his own child, for the good of the child. Proverbs 13:24 says, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." If God did not discipline us from time to time, our flesh would grow even stronger and we would hate and rebel against God and become impenitent regarding sin. The Bible says, "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." Our prison system today is filled with bastards, namely children whose parents never married, and the father did not even stay around to raise and discipline his own son. We therefore who are sons and daughters of God by faith in Christ Jesus ought to be thankful our heavenly Father is giving us such attention. He is not shortsighted as we are, but He sees the big picture and only has life everlasting in mind for us. Besides, the affliction He has given us, He has also given many others. The Bible says "all are partakers." Such temptations are "common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." Consider the many sons of God in the Bible who suffered terrible things. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, and later cast into prison. Daniel was a faithful slave in a king's house but thrown into a lion's den. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, would not bow to an idol, and so the king threw them into a fiery furnace. In each case God allowed such trials to befall his sons. In each case they remained faithful, they endured chastening, and were delivered. His love for you now as you suffer is no less than His love for them. They are now in heaven above, and you will be there too if you endure and persevere through this trial. He has not given you more than you can bear. Therefore do not resent His chastening, but willingly accept it and be thankful you are not in control of your own life but God is at the helm. His grace and everlasting love will be the strength you need to endure.

Besides, God's wisdom is behind it, and the Lord knows what He is doing. "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?" Concerning discipline, there is a difference between an earthly and heavenly Father. Sometimes our earthly fathers were overly severe in their discipline, and sometimes they didn't discipline enough. But this is never the case with our heavenly Father. His discipline is always on the mark, a perfect bulls-eye every time. Moreover His love for you is behind it all. His discipline is never overly severe, nor is it ever too mild so that we don't learn from it. It is for our profit. Likewise, just as there is a difference among

children, some are more obedient than others, and some push the envelope every day: so our heavenly Father knows if we humbly and willingly accept His will, or if we resist Him tooth and nail. If our heart is swollen with pride, or we are resisting or fighting against His Word, He can heavily afflict us so that we say with Job, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Likewise if we are weak and feel as if we are at the end of our rope, God "will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Jesus knows everything you are going through and even now He looks upon you with compassion. Your trial will come to an end. Our God of Hope grants us relief.

Another point, not to be overlooked, is that this chastening is for our profit. "It yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." I can't help but remember an older pastor I once confessed my trial to. There were rebellious people in my congregation who were stirring up trouble, lighting fires at every opportunity. The older pastor literally laughed at me and said, "Oh dear Tobin, I wish my problems were as small as yours!" He had long ago himself profited from similar little trials, so that spiritually speaking his faith had grown, and now he faced larger trials of his own. Our trust in God then is perfected and exercised, faith grows by trial and tribulation. God seeks to increase your fruits of faith. God is like a surgeon who of necessity must wound and cut into the flesh, but it is only to remove the poison that harms our soul. Once the poison is removed He closes the wound and heals it, making us stronger than we were before. Psalm 147:3 "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." We should never forget God knows what He is doing and His grace will never fail us. Your affliction, your trial dear Christian, is custom fit to your own particular need. It is not for your destruction, but your salvation. He will not permit your bruised reed of faith to be broken, but He will strengthen your faith so that it can withstand any storm.

Tribulation profits us in many ways. They break our self-confidence. The Lord does not want you to be self-confident, but your confidence, your faith is to rest only in Him. Be confident that His grace and love for you will never change. Our trials also remove pride and work humility in our soul. There is nothing more offensive to God than the proud and arrogant heart. The Bible says, "Humble yourselves therefore under the might hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." Through affliction we understand that we are not worthy of God's salvation, nevertheless through the blood of the Lamb, everlasting life is our possession. Affliction also teaches us to be meek, which is to suffer all things for the sake of Christ. When the world persecutes us, we forgive them, love them, and pray for them. Jesus died just as much for our enemies, as He did for us. Likewise, as God is the

Judge of all, He is also the Savior of all men, especially of them that believe. Christians do not seek revenge, but we patiently suffer all things for the cause of the Gospel. As Jesus patiently endured all things for our sake, so we will patiently endure all things for His name's sake. We deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. Though our cross leads to death, Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live also.....whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

Our tribulations are, "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." We have no holiness of our own, but we partake of His holiness, for He freely shares, even gives His holiness to us. We, by faith, are arrayed in robes of white. He is "The Lord OUR Righteousness." We are righteous indeed by faith in Him, and the just shall live by faith. This is especially comforting when we feel bad about the sins we commit when afflicted. What are these sins? We question the love of God, we assume the worst of Him rather than the best, we grow impatient, we murmur and complain, we think He has given us more than we can bear. But Jesus forgives you of all these sins. God is not angry with you, nor does He hold a grudge against you, for He long ago removed each and every one of these sins from you, making them His own. We are forgiven because He is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. Do not then fear dear child, to take all your sins to Jesus. He will never turn you away. His arms are yet open, and there still is room in heaven. To believe in Him is to drink the waters of life and have life everlasting.

Therefore "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; make straight path for your feet." There is no reason to doubt or worry. Christ is still your Savior, and He always will be. God does not want us to turn aside from the path of righteousness, but rather He desires that we be healed. Be healed then, dear child of God, by God's grace. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Amen.

Pastor Tobin Pederson, 7685 Maple Hill Rd. Corcoran, MN,
55340, 763-494-5164, solideogloria96@comcast.net srmn0715