

Studies in Glory #6: Glory in Persecution; Hope of Future GLory

God is Glorified in His Sons Now, Through Our Sufferings and Persecutions

The Bible tells us in many places that we must expect persecution as believers. History is full of examples and stories of Christians being persecuted and martyred, yet remaining true to their Lord, and it is still happening today, especially in the communist and moslem countries.

Mt. 5:10-12 – “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

John 16:2 – “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”

Acts 14:22 – “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

Only God knows why some Christians have had to endure tremendous martyrdoms, others have faced only ridicule or loss of friends or job, and others seem to have faced no real difficulties at all. But regardless, all believers must be willing to face any obstacle and remain true to their confession, even to the point of death if necessary.

What is it that enables Christians to endure persecution and even martyrdom?

- 1. The knowledge that we are bearing the reproach of our Savior. We are suffering what the world would inflict upon him if it could. They hate us because they hate him.**

Phl. 1:29 – “For unto us it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”

1 P. 4:12-19 – “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. ... Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. ... Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

We glorify God by enduring persecutions patiently and by not returning evil for evil. Though it is by nature painful and grievous, we can rejoice and count it a matter of joy, because we identify with Christ and know that we suffer as his representatives on earth. Jas. 1:2-4

- 2. The knowledge that this world is not all there is, and that we have an eternal home in the heavens, where we will not only see, but will share in the glory of our great God and Savior.**

Rom. 5:2-3 – “... and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: ...”

Rom. 8:18 – “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

1 P. 1:7-8 – “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:”

It is this ability to look past the present realities and see that “the goal” is our eternal home with God in heaven. That gives us the strength to endure.

This second point leads us to the last point of this whole study:

God has Called Us to Eternal Glory

1 P. 5:10 – “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus ...”

2 P. 1:3 – “... through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

People mock at our heavenly hope as just “pie in the sky”, but our heavenly hopes and aspirations are true. They give us the strength to endure not only difficulties and heartaches, but also the coming of old age. Unbelievers live only for this life, and so their funerals are filled with despair. If all hope is in this life, then death is an unwelcome interruption of plans and enjoyments. Or maybe it is seen as nothing more than a release from pain and disease. But for the believer, old age brings us ever closer to glory with Christ, and death is just a temporary separation from family and loved ones. Instead of being the end of all hopes, it is the beginning of their realization.

Heb. 11 talks about Abraham looking past the earthly promises of seed and land (descendants and the land of Israel) to a heavenly promise. v. 10 – “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” v. 13 – “These all died in faith, not having seen the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” v. 16 – “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.”

Can you honestly say, as in the song, “This world is not my home, I’m just a passin’ through”?

Rom. 9:23 – “And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,”

a. God’s plan is to glorify himself in and through the people he has redeemed.

Eph. 1:12-14 – “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. ... Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

b. This glory is the purpose of our predestination as God’s elect.

Eph. 1:4-6 – “According as he has chosen us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. “

c. He is preparing us right now unto the glory which shall be. That is the purpose for the trials we go through.

2 Cor. 4:6 – “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Eph. 1:17-18 – “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,”

This glory will come for us at the resurrection and Jesus’ appearing.

1 Cor. 15:42-43 – “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.”

Col. 3:4 – “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

Our resurrection body will be glorious. **1 Jn. 3:2-3 – “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”**