



Devotional Thoughts :: Sufferings Compensated

Sufferings Compensated - posted by tj servant (), on: 2008/2/14 22:58

Sufferings Compensated

"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" (ROMANS 8:18).

Ah, says someone, that must have been written by a man who was a stranger to suffering, or by one acquainted with nothing more trying than the milder irritations of life. Not so. These words were penned under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and by one who drank deeply of sorrow's cup, yea, by one who suffered afflictions in their acutest forms. Hear his own testimony: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in peril among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. 11:24-27).

"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." This, then was the settled conviction not of one of "fortune's favourites," not of one who found life's journey a carpeted pathway, bordered with roses, but, instead, of one who was hated by his kinsmen, who was oft-times beaten black and blue, who knew what it was to be deprived not only of the comforts but the bare necessities of life. How, then shall we account for his cheery optimism? What was the secret of his elevation over his troubles and trials?

The first thing with which the sorely-trying apostle comforted himself was that the sufferings of the Christian are but of brief duration - they are limited to "this present time." This is in sharp and solemn contrast from the sufferings of the Christ-rejector. His sufferings will be eternal: forever tormented in the Lake of Fire. But far different is it for the believer. His sufferings are restricted to this life on earth, which is compared to a flower that cometh forth and is cut down, to a shadow that fleeth and continueth not. A few short years at most, and we shall pass from this vale of tears into that blissful country where groans and sighs are never heard.

Second, the apostle looked forward with the eye of faith to "the glory." To Paul "the glory" was something more than a beautiful dream. It was a practical reality, exerting a powerful influence upon him, consoling him in the warmest and most trying hours of adversity. This is one of the real tests of faith. The Christian has a solid support in the time of affliction, when the unbeliever has not. The child of God knows that in his Father's presence there is "fullness of joy," and that at His right hand there are "pleasures forever more." And faith lays hold of them, appropriates them, and lives in the comforting cheer of them even now. Just as Israel in the wilderness were encouraged by a sight of what awaited them in the promised land (Num. 13:23,26), so, the one who today walks by faith, and not by sight, contemplates that which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, but which God by His Holy Spirit hath revealed unto us (1 Cor. 2:9,10).

Third, the apostle rejoiced in "the glory which should be revealed in us." All that this means we are not yet capable of understanding. But more than a hint has been vouchsafed us. There will be: (a) The "glory" of a perfect body. In that day this corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality. That which was sown in dishonour shall be raised in glory, and that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power. As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:49). The content of these expressions is summarized and amplified in Phil. 3:20,21: "For our conversation is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." (b) There will be the glory of a transformed mind. "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). Oh, what an orb of intellectual light will be each glorified mind! What range of light will it encompass! What capability of understanding will it enjoy! Then will all mysteries be unraveled, all problems solved, all discrepancies reconciled. Then shall each truth of God's revelation, each event of His providence, each decision of His government, stand yet more transparently clear and resplendent than the sun itself. Do you, in your present quest for spiritual knowledge, mourn the darkness of your mind, the weakness of your memory, the limitations of your intellectual faculties? Then rejoice in hope of the glory that is to be revealed in you - when all your intellectual powers shall be renewed, developed, perfected, so that

Devotional Thoughts :: Sufferings Compensated

you shall know even as you are known. (c) Best of all, there will be the glory of perfect holiness. God's work of grace in us will then be completed. He has promised to "perfect that which concerneth us" (Psa. 138:8). Then will be the consummation of purity. We have been predestinated to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29), and when we shall see Him, "we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). Then our minds will be no more defiled by evil imaginations, our consciences no more sullied by a sense of guilt, our affections no more ensnared by unworthy objects.

What a marvelous prospect is this! A "glory" to be revealed in me who now can scarcely reflect a solitary ray of light! In me - so wayward, so unworthy, so sinful; living so little in communion with Him who is the Father of lights! Can it be that in me this glory shall be revealed? So affirms the infallible Word of God. If I am a child of light-through being "in Him" who is the effulgence of the Father's glory-even though now dwelling amid the world's dark shades, one day I shall outshine the brightness of the firmament. And when the Lord Jesus returns to this earth. he shall "be admired in all them that believe" (II Thess. 1:10).

Finally, the apostle here weighed the "sufferings" of this present time over against the "glory" which shall be revealed in us, and as he did so he declared that the one is "not worthy to be compared" with the other. The one is transient, the other eternal. As, then, there is no proportion between the finite and the infinite, so there is no comparison between the sufferings of earth and the glory of heaven. One second of glory will outweigh a lifetime of suffering. What were the years of toil, of sickness, of battling with poverty, of sorrow in any or every form, when compared with the glory of Immanuel's land! One draught of the river of pleasure at God's right hand, one breath of Paradise, one hour amid the blood-washed around the throne, shall more than compensate for all the tears and groans of earth. "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." May the Holy Spirit enable both writer and reader to lay hold of this with appropriating faith and live in the present possession and enjoyment of it to the praise of the glory of Divine grace.A.W. Pink