

Articles and Sermons :: The Importance of Perseverance by Zac Poonen**The Importance of Perseverance by Zac Poonen - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2015/1/16 19:02**

Revelation 1:9,10: I, John, your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet.

John refers to himself as a "fellow-partaker in the tribulation which is in Jesus". Every wholehearted disciple of Jesus should be prepared to partake in the "tribulation which is in Jesus", as long as he is in this world. John did not get this unveiling while living in comfort. He received it, while experiencing tribulation at Patmos, because he had been faithful to "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (v.9). He had to experience tribulation himself in order to be able to write about the saints experiencing the great tribulation from the Antichrist in the last days. God takes us through trials and tribulations first before giving us a ministry to others who are facing tribulation.

Paul said, "God encourages us in all our affliction so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the (same) encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God" (2 Cor.1:4 - Amplified).

It is not surprising therefore that the doctrine that Jesus would come secretly and take (rapture) His church out of the world, before the great tribulation, arose for the first time in a country (England) where Christians were living in comfort, and at a time (mid-19th century) when they were not facing any persecution for their faith at all. Today this doctrine continues to be proclaimed and believed by Christians who live in ease and comfort, in countries where there is no persecution against Christians at all. Since the prayers of most Christians are basically of this order: "Lord make my life more comfortable on earth", it is not surprising that they have gladly accepted this teaching of a pre-tribulation rapture of the church. Thus Satan has succeeded in lulling multitudes of Christians with a false comfort, so that they will be unprepared for the great tribulation when it does come upon them.

The words of Jesus are clear: "In the world YOU HAVE TRIBULATION. But take courage; I have overcome the world" (Jn.16:33). He never promised that we would escape tribulation - whether small tribulations or the great one. But He did say that we could overcome even as He overcame. He is far more interested in making us overcomers than in saving us out of tribulation, because He is far more interested in our character than in our comfort.

Neither did Jesus ever say that escaping the great tribulation was a reward for faithfulness, as some teach. On the contrary, He said that those who forsook everything to follow Him would have even more tribulations than others who didn't follow Him (Mk.10:30).

When He prayed to His Father for His disciples, He said, "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil" (Jn.17:15). He did NOT want His disciples to be raptured out of the world at that time, just because they were going to face tribulation.

In the 3rd-century when Christians were being thrown to the lions in the Roman amphitheatres and being burnt at the stake in different parts of the Roman empire, the Lord did not rescue them from such tribulations. The God Who shut the lions' mouths and took away the power of the fiery furnace in Daniel's day, did NOT do such miracles for these disciples of Jesus - for these were new-covenant Christians who were going to glorify God through death. Like Jesus their Master, they neither asked for, nor expected twelve legions of angels to come and protect them from their enemies.

From heaven, God watched the Bride of His Son being torn to pieces by lions and being burnt to ashes; and He was glorified in their testimony - for they had "followed the Lamb, wherever He went", even unto a violent physical death (Rev.14:4). The only word that the Lord spoke to them was, "Be faithful until death and I will give you a crown of life" (Rev.2:10).

Even today, when the disciples of Jesus are being tortured and persecuted for His Name in many lands, the Lord does not take them away from the earth. And He will not rapture us to heaven before the great tribulation either. He will do something far better. He will make us overcomers in the midst of the great tribulation.

Jesus is far more interested in saving us from evil than in saving us from tribulation. He permits us to go through tribulation

on because He knows that that is the only way that we can become spiritually strong.

Such a message is strange teaching indeed to a comfort-loving Christendom that has been coddled in their pews every Sunday for years by ear-tickling preachers. But this is the message that the apostles preached to the early churches. "They (the apostles Paul and Barnabas) strengthened the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'" (Acts 14:22).

The little trials that we face at home and at work now, are but a preparation for the greater ones that will come in the days to come. That is why it is essential that we are faithful now. For God says, "If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses?" (Jer.12:5).

John speaks here about being a "fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus" (v.9). We have to enter into fellowship with Jesus in tribulation first, before we can share His throne with Him in His kingdom.

Perseverance is a great virtue that is emphasised throughout the New Testament. Jesus Himself said "They will deliver you to tribulation... but the one who endures to the end shall be saved" (Mt.24:13).