

PARABLES

Bringing Hidden Things to Light



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Parables Bookshelf - Series 1.14.3

This newsletter continues the book titled "*The Way of the Disciple*."

Although this book is focused upon that suffering appointed to the disciples of Christ, we can observe that suffering is common to all mankind. There are multitudes that have never heard the good news of Christ who suffer. Eventually all men die.

Some have asked whether all suffering that a Christian encounters can be considered as suffering for Christ. The answer is easily discovered. There is a difference between suffering for our obedience to Christ, and suffering for disobedience.

1 Peter 4:15-16

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Without question, much suffering among Christians is due to sin. Some of this sin is our own, and some of it was our forefather's. When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden all mankind became subject to sickness and death.

We must always be discerning of the cause of suffering. We cannot say that all suffering is due to our being a disciple of

Christ any more than we could say that all sickness is due to sin in our lives. Sometimes sickness is given to a man so that Yahweh can demonstrate His glory by bringing healing.

John 9:2-3

And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Yahshua answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

There are many reasons for suffering, and we must have the mind of Christ to discern the purpose of

Food for Thought

"A man should be like tea; his real strength appearing when he gets in hot water." Author Unknown

"Character in a saint means the disposition of Jesus Christ persistently manifested." Oswald Chambers

"A Pharisee is hard on others and easy on himself, but a spiritual man is easy on others and hard on himself." A.W. Tozer

Scripture Memory

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

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- Series 1.14.3
- *The Way of the Disciple*
- Chapters 7-8

The Way of the Disciple

The Privilege of Persecution

Luke 6:22-23

“Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.”

In recent days two separate articles have come to my attention that reveal that persecution of Christians is on the increase in America. The Spirit expressly testifies that

Suffering is not a great evil to be avoided at any cost...

these things will increase, and very markedly so. We are at that time which the Bible refers to as “the beginning of birthpangs.” In order for mature sons

and daughters of God to come forth, the church must pass through a season of pain and sorrow. When it is observed that a “man child” has come forth to the glory of God, all the pain of what was experienced will be forgotten.

Matthew 24:8-13

“But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.”

John 16:21-22

“A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And you now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you.”

When the church observes actual instances of Christian persecution in America, the response of many is shock and outrage. Many are tempted to resist such persecution through whatever political or human means that are at hand. Such responses reveal a wrong mindset, and a misapprehension of the purpose of suffering. Suffering is not a great evil to be avoided at any cost; It is a privilege to be borne by those who are true disciples of Christ.

Let me share with you an excerpt from the first article that recently drew my attention to the escalating persecution of Christians and their beliefs.

Gay activists get LifeSiteNews translator and pro-family activist Julio Severo cut off by PayPal

by Matthew Cullinan Hoffman

September 19, 2011 (LifeSiteNews.com) - Under pressure from homosexual activists, PayPal has decided to deny service to famed Brazilian pro-life and pro-family Christian activist Julio Severo.

In additon, at least two Christian organiza-

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tions targeted by the same activists remain under investigation by PayPal and may also lose use of the service.

Severo, an Evangelical essayist who also translates for LifeSiteNews, maintains a highly influential blog in Portuguese that is read and commented on by politicians in Brazil's federal government. He is also the author of several books, including a work on the homosexual movement in Brazil.

Severo's use of PayPal has been targeted in recent weeks by the homosexual group "All Out," which has created an online petition to urge PayPal to dump Severo and nine other PayPal users as purveyors of "hate" and "extremism." Severo's site expresses love of homosexuals and a concern that homosexual behavior is destructive to those who participate in it.

Following the initiation of the campaign, Severo and several others on the list have been contacted by PayPal, asking for information on their organizations and implying that they are not in compliance with PayPal policies.

Following Severo's response noting that he is not an organization, only an individual, PayPal responded today stating, "We appreciate your interest in PayPal. However, due to legal and regulatory constraints, PayPal Private Limited is unable to process donation payments for non-registered charities and non-profit organizations (NPOs); political party/organizations; religious institutions; personal/organizational fundraisers, etc in countries under its jurisdiction."

"This is not a decision we make lightly, and we deeply regret any inconvenience or frustration this matter may cause you," PayPal adds. "Please understand that this decision is final."

The organization adds that it will not permit Severo to access any funds remaining in the account for 180 days, after which it will inform him of how to recover them...

Homosexuals also managed to remove Severo's blog from Blogger for a short period of time in 2008, after complaining about its content. However, following a massive outcry from Brazilian Christians, his site was restored.

"I am very worried, because PayPal caved in to gay militants and their hate campaign to have me excluded from PayPal," Severo told LifeSiteNews.

"I use PayPal to pay for essential services for me and my family. And we are in a very limited situation, because we are away from Brazil because of gay and government persecution. Our resources are limited," he added. "And now under pressure of my persecutors, PayPal is making sure that my ways to receive donations may be even more limited and hard."

Suffering is a privilege to be borne by those who are disciples of Christ.

"Millions of individuals use PayPal to receive money. Why cannot I receive too?" Severo

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asks and points out that "I am not a charity. I am only a Christian individual with a wife and four little children..."

[Source:

<http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/gay-activists-get-lifesitenews-translator-and-pro-family-activist-julio-sev/>]

As a Christian teacher with a website hosted by Blogger, who also receives gifts from Christian brothers and sisters through Paypal, this story strikes close to home. Satan has

Yahshua entrusted His life into the hands of His Father...

often employed fear of suffering as a tool to silence Christians and to drive truth underground. Should I begin to censor my writings to insure that

they do not offend various groups or individuals, fearing that my source of support, or my ability to share publicly with others, might be cut off? Once we begin down the path of permitting fear to dictate our actions it is very difficult to recover.

As Christ is our pattern, we do not see that He ever compromised in speaking forth the mind of His Father. Even when He knew that the religious leaders of Israel would be incensed and begin seeking His life, He spoke boldly and without apology. Yahshua entrusted His life into the hands of His Father knowing that He would be protected until the time appointed by the Father for Him to suffer.

In Peter, we initially see a very different response. Observing that Christ's open declaration of the things of God led to arrest and suffering, Peter was initially cowed as he feared the same result. Three times on the night of

Christ's arrest, Peter denied that he even knew Yahshua. To save himself from suffering, Peter denied the Lord who had chosen him.

At the third appearing of Christ after His resurrection, we find Yahshua speaking to Peter about his failure. Even as Peter denied Yahshua three times, Christ asks him three times, "Peter, do you love Me?" Christ then tells Peter that he cannot avoid suffering, but must embrace it. Only in this way will Peter be able to fulfill the desire of God and be brought to the full image of Christ.

John 21:17-20

Yahshua said to him..., "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

These words of Christ, although having a literal fulfillment, were spoken as a parable to reveal spiritual truth. In our immaturity, our lives are guided by our own soul. Our soul's seek to avoid suffering, but following such a course causes Christians to remain as spiritual children. In order to progress to maturity we must all stretch out our hands and embrace the suffering of the cross appointed to us. We cannot refuse to share in the sufferings of Christ. It is only through suffering that we are brought to a mature conformity to Christ.

Yahshua was expressing to Peter that he must

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yield to the cross, and become willing to go where his own soul would not choose to go. If Peter would advance to spiritual maturity (“when you grow old”), he must permit someone else to gird him and guide him. This person is the Spirit of Christ. He will clothe us in garments of humility and lead us down an afflicted path.

People of God, this story about Paypal cutting off service to this man who has been speaking out openly against the sin of homosexuality is just one example of the growing intolerance

Christian persecution is on the increase, and will only accelerate.

of the preaching of Biblical truth. This morning a sister forwarded to me a link to a story on the website *Prison Planet*. It lists 18

(6+6+6) examples of the persecution of Christians at this hour. Whether each of these events are truly examples of suffering for Christ, I am unable to judge. However, I am persuaded that Christian persecution is on the increase, and will only accelerate. Following is an excerpt from the article:

#1 Home Bible studies are now banned in the city of San Juan Capistrano, California. According to city officials, regular gatherings “of more than three people” in private homes are simply not allowed. One couple that has held home Bible studies for years has already been fined twice [2] and is being threatened with even more fines.

#2 Paypal has initiated “formal investigations” of a large number of Christian websites and organizations. Apparently, many of these investigations have been launched due to concerns that these websites and organi-

zations do not hold to a “politically-correct” view of sexuality...

#3 In Wichita, Kansas last year, a Christian minister was handcuffed and hauled off to jail by police for sharing the gospel and handing out tracts to Muslims on a public sidewalk. Apparently freedom of speech does not apply on the public sidewalks of America any longer.

#4 In the UK, police recently threatened a cafe owner with arrest for silently playing a Bible DVD on a small television on the back wall of his cafe. The following is an excerpt from a Daily Mail article about this incident....

Mr Murray, 31, was left shocked after he was questioned for nearly an hour by the officers, who arrived unannounced at the premises.

He said he had turned off the Bible DVD after an ‘aggressive inquisition’ during which he thought he was going to be arrested and ‘frog-marched out of the cafe like a criminal.’

#5 Last year, a high school student in Southern California was suspended for two days because he had private conversations with his classmates during which he discussed Christianity. He was also banned from bringing his Bible to school ever again.

#6 Big cable networks regularly feature “comedians” that love to mock Christians. For example, HBO “comedian” Bill Maher

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recently stated that “there’s a term for people who hate charity and love killing: Christian.”

#7 Down in Texas, the Department of Veteran Affairs actually tried to ban prayers that include the words “God” or “Jesus” during funeral services for veterans.

#8 In North Carolina last year, a pastor was dismissed from his chaplain duties for praying in the name of Jesus.

#9 An unclassified Department of Homeland Security report published a couple years ago entitled “Right-wing Extremism: Current

Christ’s theology in His day was certainly considered “radical.”

Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment” claims that a belief in Bible prophecy “could motivate

extremist individuals and groups to stockpile food, ammunition and weapons.” The report goes on to state that such people are potentially dangerous.

#10 Back on February 20, 2009, the State of Missouri issued a report entitled “MIAC Strategic Report: The Modern Militia Movement.” That report warned that the following types of people may be potential terrorists....

*anti-abortion activists

*those that are against illegal immigration

*those that consider “the New World Order”

to be a threat

*those that have a negative view of the United Nations

#11 All over the nation, “child protection agencies” are ripping an inordinate number of children out of Christian homes. In many of these cases the parents believe in homeschooling their children or they do not believe in having their children vaccinated.

#12 On June 18, 2010 two Christians decided that they would peacefully pass out copies of the gospel of John on a public sidewalk outside a public Islamic festival in Dearborn, Michigan and within three minutes 8 police officers surrounded them and placed them under arrest.

#13 A Christian consultant was recently fired by Bank of America and by Cisco because they discovered a book that he had written that expressed Christian viewpoints about social issues.

#14 A while back, a federal judge actually ruled that the University of California can deny course credit to applicants from Christian high schools that use textbooks that teach that it was God who created the earth.

#15 Back in 2009, one 8 year old boy in Massachusetts was sent home from school and was forced to undergo a psychological evaluation because he drew a picture of Jesus on the cross.

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#16 *The Obama administration has announced that there is a whole host of laws that it will not be enforcing, but one thing that the Obama administration has chosen to do is to aggressively pursue lawsuits against anti-abortion protesters.*

#17 *During a Congressional hearing earlier this year, U.S. Representative Sheila Jackson Lee warned that “Christian militants” might try to “bring down the country” and that such groups need to be investigated.*

#18 *According to a shocking FBI document obtained by Oath Keepers, the FBI definition of “suspicious activity” now includes making “extreme religious statements” and believing in “radical theology.”*

[Source: <http://www.prisonplanet.com/18-examples-of-how-christians-are-being-specifically-targeted-by-big-brother.html>]

Christ’s theology in His day was certainly considered “radical.” So too was the preaching of the apostle Paul. Not surprisingly, their words stirred up strong emotions and at times a violent response from those who heard them. If the sons of God speak forth those things Yahweh’s Spirit delivers to them to speak in this hour, it too will be considered radical, offensive, and will provoke a response of persecution.

John 15:20

“Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you...”

II Timothy 3:10-12

But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me! And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Yahshua will be persecuted.

When Paul speaks of being delivered by the Lord out of all his persecutions, he is not implying that he was spared experiences of suffering. Christ gave Paul strength to stand, and not shrink back, when faced with suffering.

Christ gave Paul strength to stand, and not shrink back...

It was the will of Christ that Paul suffer many things. This fact was expressed at the very time of Paul’s conversion.

Acts 9:15-16

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

Although you and I may never be called to suffer as many things as Paul, Yahweh has specifically appointed experiences of suffering for everyone who would follow in the steps of Christ. We must not shrink back from these experiences as Peter did on the night of Christ’s arrest. We must embrace the cross appointed to each of us.

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The vast majority of Christians in America who come across articles such as those cited in this chapter will be alarmed. Their immediate response will be to cry out in indignation, and perhaps to engage in some carnal means

The church has not been taught the role and necessity of suffering...

of averting further persecution against Christians. The church has not been taught the role and necessity of suffering for Christ. Deceptive teachings

that assert that God wants to provide an uninterrupted life of blessing and prosperity to the saints has deeply weakened the churches ability to stand. When persecution and suffering presents itself to the church in coming days, a great many will fall away.

Mark 4:16-17

“And in a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.”

Christ encouraged those who would follow as His disciples to adopt a very different mindset from that which is so prevalent in this hour of sensuality, ease, and comfort. He told His disciples to think of themselves as “blessed” when all men hate them. He told them to “leap for joy” with the understanding that they have a great reward in heaven.

It is a privilege to be permitted to share in the sufferings of Christ. In coming days, many saints will be invited to partake of this privilege. To natural eyes, such things look like no

privilege at all. Men think it a curse to be turned out of homes, to have their possessions confiscated, to be arrested, reproached, blasphemed, and roughly treated. In coming days, many will be put in prisons, and some will lose their lives for their obedience to follow Christ wherever He would lead. Let us have our minds made up ahead of time that we will accept whatever comes, and not turn back.

Revelation 12:11

“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death.”

Let us “think it not strange” when these experiences come to us. Tribulation is appointed to all of the sons of God. There is a cup of suffering that Christ drank from, and He would offer it to all who are called and chosen as sons. There is a baptism of fire that all must pass through.

Mark 10:39

Yahshua said to them, “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.”

Let us not be alarmed at the increasing enmity of the world toward Christianity. These things must come. The swelling tide of Christian antipathy cannot be turned back through political activism, through boycotts, letter writing campaigns, or any other means. Christ prophesied that His disciples would be hated by all nations. It is vain to seek to produce a safe society where Christians can worship God and serve Him unmolested. To seek

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such a course will only result in a watered down message, compromised obedience, and disciples of Christ that have lost their saltiness and are good for nothing.

The Father has been merciful to me and has never shown me too much of what lies ahead. Yahshua testified, “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,” urging His disciples to “take no thought for tomorrow.” Tomorrow will come. There will be evil things we must pass through. Many will be rejected by family, friends, church members, and society. Some will experience the loss of all worldly possessions. More than a few will be beaten, imprisoned and even put to death. As the elect of God bear up patiently under all things while maintaining a heart of love and forgiveness, they will prove that they are worthy of the name of Christ, and that the world is not worthy of them.

Hebrews 11:35-38

And others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

We should not be surprised that Paypal should refuse service to the disciples of Christ in these last days. An hour is coming when those who bear the imprint of Christ, and have overcome the mark of the beast, will not

be permitted to buy or sell in a world under the dominion of Satan. The faith of the saints must be tested. Those who stand fast will find that their faith will be purified even as gold is refined in a fire.

Our faith is precious in the eyes of God. Let us not cast away our confidence, for the words of the apostle are true:

I Peter 5:10

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

There is a beneficent purpose behind the suffering appointed to us. Yahweh would have us perfected and established as sons ready to receive an inheritance imperishable in the heavens. Let all who would be perfect put on the mind of Christ who said, “Not My will, but Thy will be done.”

“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof...”

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The Christian Life as Tragedy

You are probably familiar with the genre of writing known as tragedy. Some famous examples of this form of writing are William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Macbeth*. One definition for the writing form known as Tragedy is, "any literary composition, as a novel, dealing with a somber theme carried to a tragic conclusion."

The life of a Christian disciple is aptly described by these words, but only insofar as it relates to our experiences on this earth. What most eyes fail to see, even Christian eyes, is that when the final curtain closes on this earthly life, there opens an entirely new curtain into realms of life in the Spirit. This present life is only the precursor to much greater things to come.

The shortsightedness, unbelief, and carnal desires of many Christians lead them to view this life as the main event, if not the only event. Although a great many Christians

This present life is only the precursor to much greater things to come.

speak of life after death, heaven, and ages to come, they do not actually put any stock in such notions. They live as if there is no tomorrow, as if this

present life is all there is. Having such a mindset, they are very much intent on enjoying their good things now. I have shared previously the plethora of books put out by a myriad of Christian authors that promote the pursuit of worldly success, pleasure and prosperity. You can find one such blog at the following link. The post consists primarily of images of book covers. A picture is truly worth a thousand words.

<http://parablesblog.blogspot.com/2010/04/road-to-hell-is-paved-with.html>

One very evident fact that stands out as I contemplate the prosperity message is that it is advocating something very different than a life of tragedy and suffering. No doubt, many would question whether it is appropriate to describe the Christian life as tragedy. The Bible reveals that such a description is very fitting. The apostle Paul stated:

I Corinthians 15:19

If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

Paul's statement is easily understood. Paul knew that Christ's invitation was to "come and suffer." There is a cross for every disciple who would follow in the steps of Christ.

I Peter 2:21

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps...

The life of Christ is given to the church as a pattern of all who would follow Him. The life of Yahshua was described in the following manner:

Isaiah 53:3

He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and well acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

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From a temporal viewpoint, the life of Christ was a tragedy. Yahshua had formerly existed in the likeness of God, and shared in Yahweh's glory. Yet He emptied Himself and took on the form of a bondservant. His life had been scripted for Him before He ever came to earth. This fact is quite easily defended by the myriad of prophecies that were spoken hundreds of years before His birth.

Yahweh had foreordained everything that was to occur in the life of His Son. The story Yahweh wrote for His Son was one of tragedy and suffering.

Acts 2:23

This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

Isaiah 53:10

Yahweh was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief...

Yahweh wrote the life story of His Son before He was born of a virgin. The story was one of persecution and much affliction. Christ came to His own, and His own people received Him not. He was rejected, and persecuted by the one's He came to save. Yahshua was accused of having a demon, of being illegitimately born, of being a Samaritan, whom the Jewish people despised. Christ was born in poverty, and His life ended in shame as He was cruelly beaten, scourged, and crucified between two thieves.

This is the story that Yahweh wrote for His

beloved Son, and it is truly a tragedy. If Christ's life had ended at the cross, it would be the saddest story ever told. But it did not end there.

Philippians 2:8-11

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Yahshua every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Yahshua Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Christ arose from the dead, and He has been seated at the right hand of God. All power and all authority has been entrusted to Him. Yahshua is now clothed in glory, and the angels in heaven bow before Him in worship and adoration.

What this entire series has been seeking to emphasize is that there is a pattern to Yahweh's work among mankind. Christ's life reveals this pattern. There is humility before exaltation, and suffering before glory.

Proverbs 15:33

Before honor comes humility.

I Peter 4:13

To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

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First there is suffering, then there is glory. Yahweh has stamped this pattern upon the entire creation. There are none who can overturn this order that has been established by the counsel of God. All must pass through suffering on their way to exaltation as sons of God. Even as a play opens with Act One, Scene One, so too has Yahweh ordained that our pathway to progression as mature sons in His image must begin with sorrow. He has called this opening experience of our lives, “the first things.”

Revelation 21:4

And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; **the first things** have passed away.

This pattern is declared everywhere throughout the pages of Scripture. It is an inviolable

First there is suffering, then there is glory...

principle. It is appointed unto mankind to experience mourning, crying and pain. There will be sorrow and suffering in this age, but those who

embrace it, and walk faithfully with the Father, will find that it is merely the precursor to far surpassing and glorious things to come.

Psalms 126:5-6

Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

II Corinthians 4:17

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison...

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us.

These last two passages were written by the apostle Paul. His life on this earth was also a tragedy. Yahweh was the author of those experiences Paul was required to pass through. At the very time that Yahweh made His call on Paul's life known, He declared:

Acts 9:15-16

He is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.

People of God, the Spirit expressly declares that God has a predetermined path for each of our lives. The plan He has designed for you and I could very aptly be described as a tragedy, for He promises that the only way to life is by following an “afflicted path,” and no man can be Christ's disciple unless he takes up “his cross” and follows in the steps of Yahshua. The following words summarize the experience set before those who accept Christ's invitation to follow Him.

Romans 8:35-36

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution,

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or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

Yes, these words are written for your sake, and mine. Whenever a man or woman surrenders their life to follow Christ they will be led into much tribulation. Christ promises no disciple ease and comfort and blessing in this life. What He promises is that they will experience the same sufferings of which He was made a partaker. Yet, as they yield themselves to follow in His steps, they will be laying up for themselves joy and riches and honor and glory that is far beyond compare.

Paul said that while he was following Christ he was "afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within" (II Corinthians 7:5). Yet, the time came when Paul had faithfully completed his course and he was standing at the finish line. Paul had arrived at the end of the "first things" and was poised to enter into the good things to come. He wrote:

II Timothy 4:7-8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Who are those who love Christ's appearing? It is those who have heeded the call to follow hard after Christ, walking the same afflicted path He walked. Of these it is written:

I Corinthians 2:9

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

People of God, this present life that you and I live exists for a brief moment. It only seems like this life is endless. There are far surpassing ages to come. Yet this is the time given for you and I to share in the sufferings of Christ. To the degree that we do so we will be able to rejoice at His appearing, for we will then share in His glory.

This present life has been choreographed by the Father. He has written up Act One of each of our lives as a tragedy. But the story of our lives does not end there. It is only the beginning. We must pass through sorrows, for a brief moment, but it leads to far greater things.

Yahweh has given mankind the parable of childbirth to help us to understand this process. Life must always spring forth out of sorrow. Yet, for those who submit to this process, the joy that follows will be so far surpassing all other experiences that the sorrow that preceded it will be forgotten.

*Christ promises no
disciple ease and comfort
and blessing in this life.*

John 16:20-22

"Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has

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come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a man has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”

This pattern is observed everywhere in creation and in the pages of Scripture. Yet, the church has failed to see it. Yahweh has testified of His people:

Isaiah 42:19-20

Who is blind but My servant, or so deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is so blind as he that is at peace with Me, or so blind as the servant of Yahweh? You have seen many things, but you do not observe them; Your ears are open, but none hears.

How can millions of Christians go to their churches week after week and listen to the Scriptures read, while remaining oblivious to this pattern that Yahweh has established?

*Christ did not provide
an easy path...*

How can they believe teachers of myths and fables who assure them that they can walk a broad path of prosperity, ease, and comfort now, and be assured all the glories of heaven in the ages to come? Are they not willingly deceived, for such falsehood appeals greatly to the soul of man?

Christ has done a marvelous thing. He has made a way for mankind to pass out of death and to obtain to the divine life He shares with His Father. He did not provide an easy path,

but He said it would be worth it to follow in His steps. None who ever submit to follow Christ by taking up their cross will ever declare at the end of the road that the way was too hard, or too difficult. Instead, the testimony of the saints will be, “Is that all I had to suffer? Is there no more? The reward is far too great, and I am unworthy.” Then the saints will cast their crowns at the feet of Christ, for He alone is worthy to obtain all glory, power and honor. What tremendous grace is manifested that Yahshua would share these things with us!

Yet, Christ asks one thing. If you would be a sharer in His glory, He would ask you to first share with Him in His suffering. He invites you and I to take up our cross and follow Him.

Romans 8:16-17

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, ***if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.***

Is this too much for Christ to ask? He would invite us to partake of momentary, light afflictions that we might be brought to maturity spiritually, becoming fit to share in His power and authority for the ages to come.

II Timothy 2:12

If we endure, we will also reign with Him...

If you have spent much time in the Christian religious system of this day, no doubt you

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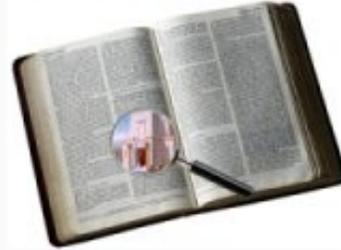
have not heard a message such as this. Is it not surprising how very many Scriptures there are that proclaim this message, yet they are unobserved by the church today?

Yahweh has a plan for your life. He has a path He would invite you to walk, even as He had one for His firstborn Son. He has revealed that it is an afflicted path, but He promises to walk with you the entire way. He declares that nothing will ever separate you from His love, not even death. It is up to you and I to choose whether we will accept the script Yahweh has written for our lives, or whether we will refuse it and write our own.

Christ has said that there are few who find the path to life, while vast hordes are on the broad path that leads to destruction. Which way will you choose? The end of the path through this present life will be arrived at very quickly for each of us. Then we will see whether we chose our path with wisdom. Did we choose like Esau to despise our inheritance and birthright to momentarily satisfy the desires of the flesh? Or did we accept an evil path in hope of obtaining a glorious inheritance at the end?

Our Father knows our frame, that we are but dust. He knows that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. He will be compassionate to our weaknesses, and He will patiently guide all who will yield to accept that story He has written for their life. Yet, let none anticipate that they will receive the reward of the overcomer in Christ if they have spurned that Way God has prepared for them to walk. We will all reap what we sow. This too is an inviolable principle.

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PARABLES PRECEPT— Is That in the Bible?

Getting baptized for the dead?



The only baptisms I have ever observed, or heard about, in our modern times involve individuals who confess faith in Christ and then submit to be baptized publicly. Did you know that the Bible speaks of Christians also being baptized for the dead?

I Corinthians 15:29

Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?

I confess that this is one practice of the early church that I do not understand at this time. I have often pondered this matter, but I have not gotten any revelation as to what this was all about.

There are many things in the Bible that strike us as odd today. No doubt if we heard of

some church down the road who were baptizing people for the dead, we might think they had been led astray into deception and grave error (pardon the pun).

As Christians, we should keep an open mind when we hear of something that is not common to our own experience. We should test all things, seeking to determine if they are supported by the testimony of the Bible, and are approved by the Spirit of Christ.