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KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 17

COMPANIONS IN TRIBULATION

"I John, who also am your brother, and *companion in tribulation*...was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9).

One of the most frequently expressed concerns among Christians is, "When is *the tribulation* going to begin?" The real question that people seldom ask is, "When is the tribulation going to *end*?" The popular teaching of the church systems is that there will be a seven-year "Great Tribulation Period" upon the whole world at the end of the church age. According to the "end-time" teachings of a number of evangelical denominations and groups, this doom is coming to the world very soon. We are, these alarmists inform us, currently in the last of the last days, and the end is upon us. Therefore, perilous times will come, the antichrist will arise upon the world scene to impose upon men the dreaded mark of the beast, and the Great Tribulation will break in savage fury upon the nations.

There are many who believe Jesus will come just prior to this time of great tribulation and rapture the church away to heaven. Some say He will come in the middle of it, and others after it is over. There have been many theological debates by so-called authorities on the subject. The more I study all these aspects, the more I wonder how they ever invented such doctrines at all — *all of them!* At the very least, the scriptures they use are completely taken out of their context. What the Bible teaches, and what most of us have been taught, are definitely two different things!

Peter, in speaking of the coming of the Lord, said, "For we have not followed *cunningly devised fables*, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (II Pet. 1:16). The apostles of our Lord did not teach or follow after *cunningly devised fables*. Yet, when it comes to the events that mark the transition from the church age into the new and more glorious age of the rule of the sons of God, vast multitudes are following *cunningly devised fables!* Believers have spent so much time listening to these cunningly devised fables proclaimed by the ministers of the carnal church systems that they have completely ignored the words of God that show there really is no such thing as a seven-year tribulation period! There is no scripture in the whole Bible that connects *seven years* with the mention of *tribulation*. It is a miscalculation, misinterpretation, and misrepresentation of the program of God! No doubt these misconceptions have been made by sincere men and women who love God, but I do not hesitate to say that the whole scheme of "end time events" proclaimed on television, radio, and from the pulpit is a *cunningly devised fable*.

Elaine Cook said it so well in one of their papers. "*Who's afraid of the big bad wolf, the big bad wolf?*" I hear the children chant at their play. It seems many Christians are afraid of one particular wolf called '*the great tribulation*.' This fear that has been planted in their hearts prevents them from seeing God's plan and purpose for them. When I speak to some people about the kingdom, they raise up the barrier of this great tribulation that must come first. I'd like to shoot down this wolf before their eyes and render it *dead* and powerless to keep people from walking in all that Jesus purchased for them. It's hard for believers to see that the kingdom *has come* because they believe the 'great tribulation' has to come first. Of course, they don't want to be here for *that*, so they want to make their exit out of here! Expecting Matthew 24 to be fulfilled in the *future* prevents them from seeing that the kingdom came in Acts 2. Jesus said, 'I won't drink wine with you again until I drink it *anew* with you *in the kingdom*.' On the day of Pentecost, they tasted wine that had never been drunk before, and they toasted the king and the coming of the kingdom! The kingdom is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost! So — receiving the Holy Ghost gives us the kingdom potential to walk in the kingdom! The kingdom of God came in power!

"*The big bad wolf* teaching would have Christians believe that they must go through seven years of tribulation before they can walk in the kingdom. They ask you, 'Are you pre-trib, mid-trib, or post-trib?' If they knew the scriptures, they would be none of these! They could throw the whole 'trib' out! Jesus said, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world' (Jn. 16:33)" — end quote.

A number of people in this "sonship" or "kingdom" message have brought this *fable* of the "end-time great tribulation" right over from their old-order doctrines of the church systems into this present move of the Spirit and word of the kingdom. Many years ago we were in fellowship with brethren who believed that within a few years the antichrist beast government would rise up in the earth and take over the government of the United States and, indeed, of the whole world. They took this old-order Babylonish doctrine, mixed it with the present truth of sonship and the kingdom, and came up with a "hybrid" revelation that it was time for the woman (end-time body of Christ) to *flee to the wilderness* from the face of

the beast. They would escape the fury of the beast and his mark, and the horrors of the great tribulation, by literally fleeing to remote wilderness areas of the world and hiding out there until the manchild would be birthed, take the throne, and wrest power from the beast.

These brethren began to raise up “farms” in remote areas of the world, where they could become self-sufficient, living off the land. A mass exodus of saints began from all over the United States and Canada. I have stood on those end-time farms where people were preparing for the great tribulation, and witnessed those precious brethren plowing the mules, pumping water, chasing cows, slopping hogs, rising before dawn, stumbling in at the close of day bone tired, physically exhausted, and spiritually drained, then required to attend nightly meetings, sing and clap, move in the Spirit, minister the Word — and all became so dry and lifeless, going through the motions by rote, for the “cares of this life” had choked the anointing and outflow of HIS LIFE. The terrible truth is that they were far less pressured and more relaxed, more in the word, and in prayer, and in the Spirit *back in the city on their jobs before* they “fled” from “Babylon”! They had the cart before the horse, anyway, for according to chapter twelve of the Revelation the woman doesn’t flee to the wilderness to birth the manchild — the manchild in born, caught up to the throne, and *then* the woman is carried away into the wilderness! And here we are, more than thirty years later, and the beast government *still* hasn’t taken over the world, nor has the anticipated Great Tribulation begun! The “great tribulation,” which is supposed to run its course for three and one half or seven years, at the end of the church age, is nothing more than the idle imaginings of men who have no knowledge of what they affirm. It is nothing but an invention of ignorance.

THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE

To grasp and comprehend this powerful truth, we must be able to *rightly divide* the word of truth. “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing* the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15). The word for “divide” is *orthotomero* meaning “to cut straight or to dissect correctly.” Would God that all His saints would be enabled by the Holy Spirit to correctly dissect, or cut apart and lay open, the word of truth! In the depths of my spirit I am sure that all who read these lines, with prayerful contemplation, will be able to correctly divide truth from error in the scripture passages I shall now quote. I list below EVERY PASSAGE in the New Testament in which the word “tribulation” appears. I am using the King James Version because it is the primary one the preachers use to teach the seven-year great tribulation that is coming upon the world after the church has been raptured to heaven.

What you should look for is the context — the connection, subject, theme, setting and application of the word. See how many times tribulation applies to the *Jews*, how many times it applies to the *ungodly* or the *world*, and how many times it applies to the *saints* of God. Consider carefully in how many cases tribulation is associated with terms such as “end time,” “last days,” “seven years,” “judgment,” “wrath,” “vengeance,” “antichrist,” “beast,” “rapture,” etc. When you have prayerfully examined all these scripture passages in relation to these questions God will speak and give you wisdom and understanding of His ways and His plan. When God speaks to your heart He will not merely help you to decide between the various opinions, teachings, and doctrines of men. When He speaks it is revolutionary and the opinions of men are discarded, for they are always contrary to His will. When the holy light of truth breaks forth in our minds and is established in our hearts, every stone of the old erroneous edifice of carnal man-made religious teachings will be thrown down and God will build within us a temple of truth and reality after the mind of Christ. The mind of Christ is the thought, intent, and purpose of God. The mind of Christ is the mind of eternal, immutable, omniscient wisdom. It is the mind of Christ which will govern the world in wisdom through the manifest sons of God! This is the mind that will bring order out of the fearful chaos that now exists! It is the mind of wisdom that will fill the whole earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the seas are filled with water! The mind of Christ is a priceless gem, rich and rare above all the treasures of earth!

Now here are the scripture passages on tribulation.

“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when *tribulation* or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Mat. 13:20-21).

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains. . .for then shall be *great tribulation*, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. . .immediately after the *tribulation of those days* shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” (Mat. 24:15,16,21,29). This speaks of the tribulation that has come upon the *Jews* beginning in A.D. 70 with the destruction of the temple by the Roman general Titus, bringing the termination of the Jewish nation and the final and complete end of the Old Covenant of Law with its priesthood and sacrificial order. The writings of the Jewish historian, Josephus, outline the history of the incredibly horrible events of that time. History records how the Christians escaped from Judea, just as Jesus foretold. This reference is repeated in Mark 13:24.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have *tribulation*: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33).

“Paul. . .departed to . . .Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 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” (Acts 14:21-22).

“*Tribulation* and anguish upon *every soul of man that doeth evil*, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile” (Rom. 2:9-10). This passage appears, to the inattentive reader, to promise tribulation upon every evil man. The contrast, however, is not between saints and sinners, but between two classes of people who are serving God! And it is not talking about every evil man, but every *soul* of man that doeth evil. There is a difference! On the surface one might think that Paul was vindictive or cruel by suggesting tribulation and anguish upon every *soul* of man that does evil, but when we understand that pressure is for a purpose, then we can see the end, that the soul may be saved and the evil dealt with in our lives. Oh, yes, there is *purpose* in pressure! Notice that the judgment of the Lord is to come upon “every *soul* of man that doeth evil.” The Greek word for “soul” here is *psuche*, and refers to the mind, will, emotion and desire of man. This is a reference to the powers of the five senses in man, including the mind, which is the seat of consciousness. Thus, the carnal nature and the carnal mind are that part of man that experiences the Lord’s indignation, wrath, tribulation and anguish, until all evil is eliminated. That is why *we must through much tribulation* enter the kingdom! God does not require His elect to pass through tribulation out of some sadistic desire to see us suffer — but He does indeed *scourge* every son whom He receives! The scourging is out of His love for us, and for our good, that we may be purified thereby. The elect are those who, because of the indwelling spirit of sonship, seek for God’s highest and best. They are the spiritual ones whose vision is fixed upon “glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life.” Their desire is for the glory of that incorruptible and immortal life of Christ! Others are looking no further than the temporary healing of this physical body, but we are looking beyond healing to a complete salvation in spirit, soul, and body, conformed to the image of the resurrected and glorified Christ!

“And not only so, but *we glory in tribulations* also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience...” (Rom. 5:3).

“Who shall separate *us* from the love of Christ? Shall *tribulation*, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us!” (Rom. 8:35,37).

“Blessed be God... who comforteth *us* in all *our tribulation*, that *we* may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith *we* ourselves are comforted of God” (II Cor. 1:3-4).

“Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all *our tribulation*” (II Cor. 7:4).

“Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at *my tribulations* for you, which is your glory” (Eph. 3:13).

“For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that *we* should suffer *tribulation*...” (I Thes. 3:4).

“So that *we* ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and *tribulations* that ye endure... seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense *tribulation* to them that trouble you” (II Thes. 1:4,6).

“I John, who also am your brother, and *companion in tribulation*” (Rev. 1:9).

“I know thy works, and *tribulation*... fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have *tribulation* ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:9-10).

“Notwithstanding I have few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols... behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into *great tribulation*, except they repent of their deeds” (Rev. 2:20,22).

“And he said unto me, These are they which came out of *great tribulation*, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14).

Now — that is **every passage** in the whole New Testament in which the word “tribulation” appears! Twice it speaks of the great tribulation that came upon the Jews when God abolished the Old Testament order of Law and Sacrifices by destroying the Jewish nation, temple, and priesthood. Once tribulation is pronounced upon those who persecute the saints. Once Jesus promises great tribulation to those believers in the churches who commit spiritual fornication. AND IN EVERY OTHER PASSAGE THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKS OF THE TRIBULATION WE ENDURE AS GOD’S ELECT! It is especially significant to note that not one single mention of either *tribulation* or *great tribulation* applies to the world or to the nations! Every mention of tribulation in the book of Revelation concerns the tribulation suffered by the Lord’s people! Where is the seven-year Great Tribulation Period the preachers so confidently and audaciously proclaim, as though it must be written all over the pages of God’s Word! With all humility of mind and with complete understanding of my own human ignorance and limitations, I want to affirm that I cannot find in the scriptures the Great Tribulation theory or any of the other so-called “end-time events” so loudly heralded from the pulpits and over radio and television. They just aren’t in the Bible!

Please disabuse your mind of the erroneous notion that the great tribulation is something that comes upon the world, or upon the wicked, or upon the kingdom of the beast. Tribulation is a word that the Holy Spirit uses in the book of Revelation *only in relation to saints*! This truth cannot be stated more eloquently than it was by John W. Follette when he wrote, “Tribulation is a word that God uses in relation to saints. The etymology of the word means *threshing*. The farmer does not thresh weeds; he threshes the golden wheat that the grain may be separated *from* the chaff and the sticks. He is after grain, not trying to pound out some straw. Therefore God says, *Tribulation worketh patience*; that is, the golden grain of patience, long-suffering and kindness, comes by way of threshing or tribulation. Think of the splendid spiritual grain of character and noble living produced only through the tribulation process. The spiritual tone and quality of the mighty men of God came only through trouble and suffering.

“In the world about us, in the fields of fine music, art and literature, the artist never reaches the climax of his labors and gives to the world the best in creative beauty and strength until he has known the poignant touch of personal sorrow or grief or trouble. Oftentimes it is like a divine alchemy turning the ordinary and prosaic life into a glorious display of divine power, fortitude and beauty. It is the *use* of trouble that releases the deeper springs of our lives and sets aflow the streams of mercy and understanding which a perishing world needs” — end quote.

George Hawtin once wrote, “What man, sweltering in the consuming heat of the fiery furnace of his affliction, can understand that naught but his shackles are being removed, but not one hair of his head is being singed? What man, receiving stripes, can know that the devastating stripes themselves are *becoming the marks of the Lord Jesus*?”

Why do men choose to believe the cunningly devised fable that “the tribulation” is the final and full outpouring of the anger, wrath, and judgment of God upon *the world*, rather than the purposeful dealing of God with His people who are to be purified, perfected, and conformed to the image of Christ? Some teachers paint a terrible picture of this tribulation which is supposed to come upon the world with phrases like: avalanche of judgment, ghastly pestilence, devastating judgments, mankind’s darkest hour, incredible horrors — a judgment so terrible that God isn’t going to let His church go through it. Where do men get such notions as these? Certainly not from the scriptures on tribulation! Why have men so naively overlooked the plain statements of scripture that trial, testing, chastening, pruning, purging, refining, and tribulation are specifically ordained *for those called and apprehended to sonship*? Can you not see how Christians do not love the truth, but hide from it? They don’t want to pass through the tribulation that worketh patience and the nature of Christ! They prefer to believe, contrary all the testimony of God, that an angry, offended, vengeful God is going to finally give this wicked old world *just what it deserves*! And while the world is experiencing the horrors of the damned, all God’s “special little saints” will be caught up on clouds of glory, indifferently and unconcernedly dancing with glee at the marriage supper of the Lamb!

The believer who has received the call to sonship and has been introduced to the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, rejoices in hope of the glory of God and *glories in tribulation* (Rom. 5:3). That this is a supernatural experience is evident from the meaning of the words that describe the suffering which purchases for us patience, perfection, eternal life, glory, the kingdom of God and the throne of the Lord! “Tribulation” has been brought into the English language from the Latin. The verb is *tribulare*, which means, “to press, to oppress, to afflict.” The Latins had a *tribulum*, a threshing sledge which separated grain from chaff. It consisted of a wooden platform studded underneath with sharp flints

or iron teeth. As this instrument passed over the pile of grain the wheat was separated from the straw. We can well understand how a man undergoing afflictions would compare his sufferings with those which would be inflicted if such an instrument passed over him. Now, how can a son of God *rejoice* in such grinding pressure?

The Greek word brings us the same terrible thought, couched under slightly different imagery. The word is *thlipsis*, and originally conveyed the idea of “pressing together, pressure.” The Greeks themselves did not use this word in connection with human suffering — only in the New Testament did the Holy Spirit chose this term to describe the experience of God’s sons! The disciples of Christ were the first to think of themselves as being in the vat like grapes or olives, and being pressed to the point where the nature of Christ within them flowed out like wine or oil! How can we press righteousness, peace and joy from pain and sorrow as one presses wine from grapes or oil from olives?

When John the Baptist was introducing the Lord to the people, he said that Christ would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Then he continued, “Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” Phillips translates it this way, “He will come all ready to separate the wheat from the chaff, and to clear the rubbish from His threshing floor. The wheat He will gather into His barn and the chaff He will burn with a fire that cannot be put out.”

The purpose of *threshing* is to separate the wheat from the straw and the chaff. This speaks plainly to us of the two aspects of our lives: the inner and the outer man, the spirit and the flesh, the spiritual and the natural, the carnal mind and the mind of Christ. The stalk grows up for weeks and then the head appears before the kernel of wheat begins to form in the head. One will see fields of beautiful green wheat waving in the wind, but there is not yet any grain! It is all there, the stalk and the head, but there is no wheat in the head. That comes later. The stalk and the chaff are necessary for the formation of the wheat. Gradually the kernel of wheat begins to form, and all the life that was in the stalk and in the head settles in the kernel. As the grain comes to maturity the rest of the plant dies, dries up, and is no longer needed. The wheat is the Christ that is formed within, the rest of the plant is our natural life which was used as a vehicle or womb for the Christ life. Paul was like a farmer nurturing the Christ life in the saints, and his cry was like that of the farmer waiting for the harvest, “My little children, for whom I travail in birth again until *Christ be formed in you!*” (Gal. 4:19). You see, the farmer is not after stalks or heads — the farmer is after *grain!* He eagerly anticipates the formation and maturation of the wheat in the head!

As the Christ within us, the life of sonship, comes to maturity there must come a separation of the wheat from the chaff and the straw. There must come a separation of the inner son from the outer man, of the spirit from the flesh, of the divine from the human. The old is no longer useful, it is only in the way, and must be destroyed. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God! When the wheat in the head matures all the life settles in the grain. That is where the fullness is! That is where Christ is formed, where His life is preserved, to be revealed! The rest of the plant has to die. There is no life in it! The straw and the chaff are dry and lifeless. They serve no further purpose. The only life there is in the kernels that have formed in the head! The only life there is in us is in the Christ who has been formed in us! The rest of us is dead. “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Phil. 3:3). There is no life in the natural man or in the carnal mind. So there has to be a separation of the old from the new, and the old must be consumed with fire. Most Christians interpret the fire to be hell fire. They think the Lord will separate the wheat (the Christians) from the chaff (the unbelievers) and cast the unsaved into hell fire. That’s not what its talking about at all! “He shall thoroughly purge *His floor...*” “His floor” is the territory of His kingdom, it is the people gathered into His kingdom. God is not in the business of burning up sinners! God is in the business of burning *out of us* that which *makes us sinners!* It is the Lord’s called and chosen and predestinated elect who appear on His threshing floor to be threshed and purged until nothing is left but Christ!

The threshing process, separating the wheat from the straw and the chaff, is one of beating, tearing, and rubbing. In ancient times the wheat was trampled by the feet of the oxen. Oxen were driven back and forth over the wheat until the separation was complete. Another method was to beat it with a flail. This was a stick and the wheat was pounded with it until the kernels were knocked from the heads. The modern combines have a rub bar process where the wheat is subjected to pressure and rubbed between two surfaces. Whatever the method used, the process of separation is not an easy one! It is not a pleasant experience! The separating of our fleshly ways from our walk in the Spirit is not a pleasurable experience either! The separation of our carnal religious traditions from the expression of our new spirit man is not a simple process. The separation of our human will from the will of God is not easy. It may *sound* easy, but believe me when I say it is not easy! The Lord has to beat us, just as a stubborn child sometimes has to be beaten with the rod of correction. The Lord has to tramp us, pound us, tear us, put us under pressure and rub until our flesh man is separated from our spirit man and there is none of the old self nature left to pollute the kingdom of God, to desecrate His temple, or to threaten the righteousness of His throne within us.

The separating is accompanied with much suffering. The firstborn Son of God was *made perfect* through the things He *suffered!* There is no other method by which we will be perfected also. George Wylie certainly understood these processings of the Lord when he wrote, “Perfection is not attained on any pathway of roses. It is a rugged, torturous way strewn with sufferings, pain, sorrow and grief, oftentimes beyond what we think we can bear. Sometimes the process is so severe as to cause His elect to cry unto Him day and night. Many days and nights I have cried unto Him, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, how long?’ When subjected to some fiery trials in the past I have often said to the Lord, ‘Lord, it is enough, I can’t take any more; please remove it, take this load from me.’ This was a prayer He never answered and I am glad now that He never did! When I prayed like this, instead of lightening the trial He heaped more on me. Instead of turning down the heat He turned it up, making it hotter. I don’t pray that way any longer! My cry now is, ‘Lord, keep the fire burning until the purifying process is complete, until there is nothing left of this old corruptible man and you have a vessel that is sanctified and meet for your use.’ Those whom He has called and chosen for this high calling are being put through the refining fires now; they are being persecuted, tramped upon, slandered, buffeted, subjected to suffering, pain, and sorrow and they cry unto God day and night. They are not crying for deliverance from the trials, but for grace and strength to bear it until the process is finished” — end quote.

Oil and wine are biblical symbols of joy, revelation, and life. Oil and wine represent the *inner essence* of the fruit from which they come. Olives and grapes are the fruits which produce oil and wine but they are not oil and wine themselves. In Palestine we find olives and grapes that have never fulfilled their true destiny! The olive shrinks and is wrinkled. A hungry man will eat such olives, and the poor people put them into their food; but the richness has evaporated. Grapes that remain on the vine harden, and after a time they are pulpy and dry. They will keep for months, dry all the time, and will still be nourishing, but the wine is gone, and the raisins excite a thirst for the juice that is not there. Such olives and grapes are better than nothing, but they are not substitutes for oil and wine! The fact is, the only way to preserve the inner essence of the olives and the grapes is to extract it from them in the form of oil and wine!

Are you satisfied with olives and grapes? Be sure they will dry up in your storehouse and will never flow out to quicken, nourish and bless humanity! Oil and wine bring lasting joy and strength and life, not olives and grapes. And surely you can see that it is not possible to have oil and wine unless olives are *pressed* and grapes are *crushed!* Even the finest fruit will not yield its essence without this process. Indeed, the finer the fruit the firmer the skin, and the heavier the pressure must be put upon it to burst its surface that the juices may flow. If the Christ life in us is to be released to humanity, we must be crushed!

To have oil and wine you must have olives and grapes. The natural man cannot bring forth the life of Christ or the ministry of sonship, because he has no fruit from which they can be produced. Religion is the product of the natural man, but religion has no life! Only the new creation man of the spirit has within him the life of God. If you are walking after the fleshly mind you can bring forth no quickening life because you have nothing but thorns and thistles. Crush them and you get thorn juice and thistle milk which never made the heart of any man rejoice! The natural man can observe rituals and ceremonies, obey rules and regulations, and do many good religious works, but he can never be conformed to the image of Christ and he can never reveal out of himself the life of God that sets creation free. This comes only from God's oil and wine; and these, in turn, are pressed only from God's olives and grapes!

Most Christians are content with the knowledge that they have olives and grapes in the garden of their life. They take a certain pride in the fact that the Lord has visited them and has digged the earth and pruned the trees and vines; He has also sent seasons of refreshing and watered them with care and even gathered fruit. They consider themselves a fruitful bough in a fertile garden. And the fruit of their lives certainly does become a blessing to many! But those who are called to sonship have been made aware that God is after something more than that. He is after grain that has been threshed, and olives that have been pressed, and grapes that have been crushed! He is after the inner kernel, the oil, and the wine where the essence and power of the inner life is brought forth. The presence of fruit alone does not satisfy the heart of the Father. Nor can it be preserved to meet the need of creation. God has caused a people in these days to become dissatisfied with the mere production of olives and grapes. If you are satisfied with grain in the head, or with olives and grapes in the vineyard of your life, you will never flow out to creation in grace, love, and power!

The olives must be pressed and the grapes must be crushed! "We *must* through *much tribulation* (pressure) enter into the kingdom of God." For this the Lord has many different processes. In all vintage countries proprietors of great vineyards have their own secrets for making wines. Connoisseurs tell the difference between the products of one vineyard and another by their tastes. Soil, sun, method of preparation, all enter into the final product. So the Lord works in each of us to bring forth a particular brand, expression, or dimension of His life that we may impart. To each He gives a new name which no man knows saving he that receives it! (Rev. 2:17). To that end the Lord is now working in the lives of all His elect sons, first growing olives and grapes in the vineyard of our life, and then pressing them out so that there may be oil and wine to bless creation. We cannot know the quality of the work of God in us except when the pressure comes! What flows out of our lives when we are pressured? Ah, have there not been those times when there was nothing but thorns and thistles, and anger, bitterness, complaining, unbelief, and ungodliness flowed out when we were crushed. But what a mighty work the Lord has been doing in us! Yet — we can never know the true quality of the Christ life formed within us until the pressures come and the essence is literally squeezed out of us! In the measure that we welcome infirmities and tribulations, we shall glory in them and realize afresh the power of Christ to transmute the suffering into glory and distill the nature of Christ from tribulation.

Yes, my beloved, the Lord is growing His olives and His grapes in the gardens of our lives, and He will press out His oil and His wine! He will give us such an expression of the outflowing of the nature, love, wisdom, glory and power of Christ that nothing else in the world will charm us like the knowledge that we are the sons of HIS LIFE. It is evident that this kind of living is miraculous, for it is not in the capacity of the natural man to give forth oil and wine. It is natural to whine and sigh and cry in adversity! The worldling often lives such a life of failure, and, alas, many Christians settle down to the same low level. But our Father has called and ordained us for better things and higher realms! We are learning to *glory in tribulations*, for we have been called to the kingdom for such a time as this!

God is constructing a temple, built of *living stones*, out of which to manifest His glory in the age and the ages to come. Tribulation has been prepared as a chisel and hammer to be used in the constructing of this building. The living stones that even now are being placed in this temple have been chosen in the furnace of affliction and in the crucible of suffering. It has been necessary that an oven be heated in which to purify the gold for God's temple, a furnace in which all the dross is separated from the gold, and all the hay, wood, and stubble is burned up from our lives. When we realize that behind every happening of our lives is the mighty hand of God working to bring forth gold from these earthen vessels, we can rejoice, as David, in our afflictions and trials and exclaim with him, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes" (Ps. 119:7). When we begin to see the good that comes from the pressures in our lives, we are able to appreciate all the more the greatness of our God and the depth of the wisdom of His great mind!

The carnal mind says, "I see no value or purpose in all this trouble and tribulation." The carnal mind is shrewd as a lawyer looking for a loophole! The carnal mind doesn't like it or want it! But the mind of Christ knows that the servant is not above his Lord. The disciple is not above his Master who learned obedience through the things He suffered. God is preparing a people who cannot be moved, upset, or frustrated by *anything*! The cry of His heart is for a people who can share His throne and shepherd the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:26-27). These have to be people of character who are unshakable. We cannot afford the luxury of our personal feelings. WE HAVE NO "RIGHTS." If we do, we'll lose them in the fire of our *great tribulation*! Our testings will last as long as it takes to change our mind, attitude, and actions. Can we walk around in the furnace without complaining? Can we sing and dance in the fire? Can we shout praises in jail at midnight? Ah, beloved, there is *purpose* in affliction. There is *purpose* in trial. There is *purpose* in suffering. There is *purpose* in tribulation!

Well has George Hawtin written: "I would to God that all God's elect might see that everything everywhere is working tirelessly and endlessly to produce *sonship* in those who are the *called according to His purpose*. Everywhere! Everything! Temptations, tears, heartaches, unfaithful friends and brethren, loss of property, loss of business, perils, hateful neighbors, fiery furnaces, dens of lions, rugged crosses, and isles of exile! *All things! All things! All things*, too numerous to mention, are working for the good of God's elect, and are adding, though unseen now, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory to us."

We who have endured our share of the persecutions of Christ shall be abundantly blessed of the Lord to receive our inheritance in the kingdom of God. "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." As we look beyond the present, with its trials and tribulations, we will see the glory of the fullness of the kingdom of God that is yet before us. The darkness of this present world, with its evil, ignorance, beastliness, and violence, is rapidly fleeting. The new morning, with the fullness of the light and glory of God and His kingdom spread upon the face of all nations, is ready to dawn upon the whole earth. It is time for a new and unprecedented *move of God*! *All* the moves of former days have grown old as a garment and are now weak, anemic, feeble, exhausted, impotent, languishing and ready to pass away. The next move of God in the earth will be the *manifestation of the sons of God* and the hour for this manifestation draws nigh.

One morning a couple of cowpunchers went out on the range to bring in a wild steer from the mountains. They took along with them one of those shaggy little gray donkeys — a burro. Now a big three-year old steer that's been running loose in the timber is a tough customer to handle. Nevertheless, these cowboys had a technique for handling this steer. They got a rope on the steer and then they tied him neck and neck, right up close, to the burro and let them go. At first, the burro had a bad time. The steer threw him all over the place. He banged him against trees, rocks, and into bushes. Time after time they both went down. But there was one great difference between the burro and the steer. The burro had

an idea. He wanted to go home! And no matter how often the steer threw him, every time the burro got to his feet he took a step nearer the corral. This went on and on. After a week, the burro showed up at the corral. He had with him the tamest and sorriest-looking steer you ever saw!

The thought of this little burro, being overpowered and abused can encourage us when we find ourselves struggling with difficult problems or people in our lives. We often feel tied, “right up close.” If we could only have some slack! But our Father had a purpose in tying us to our problems. He knows that the faith of the son of God in us will enable us to hang in there! No matter how often we are thrown, our tenacious spiritual nature will enable us to get to our feet and take a step nearer to God’s victory! We may be abused and hurt. But just think of the tremendous outcome — that we might eventually stand before the throne of our Father — an *overcomer* indeed! You see, my beloved, God’s techniques make sense after all!

If you will look closely at the scriptures you will see that it has never been God’s purpose to save His people *from* tribulation, but to bring them *through* tribulation and *out of* tribulation victoriously on the other side. Consider the case of Daniel. He was a man of God who lived among a people who hated God and hated His people. Daniel was also a man who prevailed with God in prayer! Yet God arranged for him to be thrown into a den of lions. While this was going on, Daniel was no doubt praying earnestly for deliverance. But what did God do? He didn’t stop the enemies of Daniel! He allowed them to throw Daniel into the den with the starving lions! However, God delivered Daniel *by being with him in the lion’s den!* God stopped the mouths of the lions, and as a result the God of heaven was magnified throughout all the kingdom of Babylon!

We cannot dictate to God the way that He will deliver us, or to what extent He is going to allow us to be thrust into the fires of tribulation. God is sovereign! He ordains for every son to be tried just as the firstborn Son was tested by the devil in the wilderness. No matter how difficult the situation, God is ingenious and has a thousand ways to glorify His name through our tribulation that we have never even thought of!

Another example of this is that of the three Hebrew children who, during the time of the Babylonian captivity, were thrown into the fiery furnace for refusing to bow down to the idol statue of the Babylonian king. Could God have prevented them from being cast into the furnace? Of course He could! But instead He allowed them to be bound and thrown into the flames. These young men did not dictate to God how He should deliver them, or even whether He should deliver them. They knew that the greater evil from which they needed to be delivered was that of disobeying and dishonoring the Lord! They were more concerned about being delivered from this sin than being delivered from the fiery furnace! They were willing to die rather than reproach the name of the Lord within themselves. But there was *one in the midst!* Ah, today my beloved, there is *one in the midst* of us who walks with us in all our troubles! He is there, always there, for He is the one in the midst of each of us. It is the Christ! He is the Lord of the fires! He is the Creator of the lions! All is in His omnipotent hands, and He dwells within every son of God. Oh, the wonder of it! We do know and testify that every happening in our lives is freighted with divine purpose. Many of God’s elect today are passing through pressing and trying times, yet we praise God for all the processings and dealings by which we are made overcomers. Truly the Father is bringing us into new dimensions of faith, wisdom, love, and the image of God! We know that we stand on the threshold of a divine breakthrough into higher realms of life and glory! We must press through tribulation. We must learn God’s purposes and His ways. God’s intent is not to take us **out** of pressure, but to lead us by His Spirit and bring us **through** pressure. “Yea, though I walk **through** the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: **for Thou art with me...**” What a wise and strong and glorious people we shall be when the work is completed!

“He turned the sea into dry land: they went **through** the flood on foot...for Thou, O God, hast proved us: Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; Thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went **through** fire and **through** water: but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place” (Ps. 66:6,1-12).

Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing **through** the valley of Baca (weeping) maketh it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God” (Ps. 84:5-7).

“Our fathers understood not Thy wonders in Egypt...He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so He led them **through** the depths, as **through** the wilderness. And He saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy”(Ps. 106:7-12).

“To Him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for His mercy endureth for ever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm...to Him which divided the Red Sea into parts...and made Israel to pass **through** the midst of it...but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea...to Him which led His people **through** the wilderness...” (Ps. 136:10-18).

“And I will bring the third part **through** the fire, and I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: and they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God” (Zech. 13:9).

“But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel. Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest **through the waters**, I will be with thee; and **through** the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: and when thou walketh **through** the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour...” (Isa. 43:1-3).

“They returned again...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” (Acts 14:21-22).

God is forming His Son and building His kingdom in our lives! If you desire Him to construct His nature in your life, then you, O child of God, must learn this one simple and sublime truth: In every situation and circumstance, in every difficulty and problem, in every test and trial, in all trouble and tribulation — God *will* bring you **THROUGH!**

[To be continued...](#)

J. PRESTON EBY

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