Suffering and Strength

Matthew 26:31-46

Pastor Ron Prosise
March 28, 2010
Shepherd's Community Church

Temptation and Failure (31-35)

(Job 14:1; Zechariah 13:7; Proverbs 16:18; 28:26; Matthew 5:3; 18:4 John 15:5; Luke 22:24, 31-33; James 4:2)

Temptation and Victory (36-46)

(John 18:1-2; 17:5; 10:18 Luke 22:39, 44-45; Matthew 16:21-23; 10:28-29; Isaiah 53:10; 51:7; James 4:8)

One of the benefits of in-depth Bible study is it changes you forever, that is, if you honestly seek God and His Word and attempt to live by His truths. Whenever you search deeply into God's Word, verses and subjects you have read all your life burst into new meaning. It is though the eyes of your soul have suddenly opened, and you wonder why you did not see such dazzling truths earlier.

Because God's Word is eternal, new wonders always await being discovered. For me, this is the thrill of Bible study: mining out from God's written treasure chest. Several times people would approach me after a class or church service and say, "This is wonderful!" They were right. They were not saying that I was wonderful. In reality, what they were saying is they had their souls fed. I knew of what they spoke—God fed my soul before He fed theirs.

One such item you may have repeatedly read but maybe never noticed is the number of times the writers of Scripture associated suffering with glory. For instance, in the verses just cited concerning the road to Emmaus, Jesus had to point out the necessity of His sufferings as a means to enter His glory. Peter described himself in First Peter 5:1 as a "witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed." Peter explained that the confused Old Testament prophets predicted "the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1:11). After his instruction to the readers not to be surprised at their fiery trials, he continued, "but 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" (4:13). Even in the promise verse of our previous chapter, Peter linked the two: "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." Suffering and glory, repeatedly linked, but always in that order.

What overwhelming grace to know that our suffering is short and for a purpose, and that God Himself will intervene to rebuild. Add to this the growing weight of eternal reward, and it makes us almost—almost, but not quite—sorry for those who never have suffered greatly. Unknown to human reasons but all part of His grand design, God will bring you to a point where you can be a firsthand experiential witness of His magnificent work. What a promise! What a God! We will also compare notes throughout eternity with this aspect of God's work as well. It makes us understand those in Revelation 4:10 who cast their crowns before God's throne, realizing all glory and praise belong to Him. God protects us, keeping us from the full assault and temptation we could never bear. Jesus stepped into human history to endure what we could not, and then amazingly shares the results of His victory we could never collectively achieve. God gives us strength to endure our trials, even when we whine and are impatient and unthankful. To top it off, if we look only to Him and endure, He will reward us, both on earth and into eternity. What have we achieved? He has done it all. It makes a little better sense why Paul instructed the Philippians, "It has been graciously given unto you not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." God works such mighty deeds through and around those tried by fire who stand firmly until the end. To summarize, what God's Word states about those who suffer according to God's will is this: *We are headed for glory!*

Greg Harris, *The Cup and the Glory*, 143-146