

## YOUR COMPANION IN TRIBULATION

Every true Christian is expected to practice his faith in the enemy's territory. Apostle Paul compares the life of a Christian to that of a battle. "Fight the good fight of faith" is his exhortation to Timothy (1 Tim.6: 12). After 31 years of eventful history with the Lord, Paul could say, "I have fought a good fight" (2 Tim.4: 7). The new convert, if sincere in his pursuit of the Lord, will soon discover the reality of this fight. Friends turn into enemies and one is forced to repeat what Christ said of Himself. "They hated me without a cause" (John 15:25).

Such was the lot that John and other Christians found themselves in. Instead of looking upon the godly John and other Christians of holy faith as assets, Domitian declared them to be traitor and criminals. He banished John to the lonely island of Patmos, but God encouraged His servant by granting vision and revelations regarding the future. Though written 20 centuries ago, the book of Revelation is prophetic and futuristic in nature. God's plan for the future is laid bare before our eyes. What blessed hope it offers to every persecuted Christian!

The Triune God appeared to John and he wrote what he saw. The way this aged Apostle introduces himself is worthy of note. Rev .1: 9 reads thus: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ". Though the only surviving Apostle, he made no mention of his privileged position. He was content to say, "I am your brother" and then adds, "I am your companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ". His companionship with all believers is based on three unassailable facts; tribulation, kingdom and patience. In the order of experience, we presently go through tribulation and patience, awaiting the kingdom. One in tribulation and affliction! One in patience and waiting! One in ruler-ship and kingdom!

One in tribulation! Companion in tribulation! Instead of highlighting his own suffering, John linked himself to all Christians who suffered like-wise. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man" (1Cor.10: 13). Peter, who avoided the very subject of sufferings in the Gospels, had this to write. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Pet.4:12) and then in the following chapter added that "...the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world"(5:9).

Job 14:1 makes a sweeping statement. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble". In a sin -infested, Satan -ruled world. Inhabited by the fallen Adamic race, rest, peace and happiness are always elusive. Every human undergoes suffering in varying intensities. The question therefore to be raised is not, "Am I suffering" but "Am I suffering aright for the right reasons?"

The Holy Scripture makes a threefold classification of all sufferers. Firstly, the sinner without God (Psa.1 07: 17). "Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted". Being at war with God no man can be at peace with himself or others. All our peace treaties fail only because we are trying to achieve the impossible -peace without the Prince of peace. It is said that since dating began mankind has seen only 292 calendar years without war. If riches, education, civilization could make us all good people then our present century must be the happiest of all generations! Prov.13: 15 tells us, that "the way of transgressors is hard" and Job 9:4 asks us a question, "who hath hardened himself, against him, and

hath prospered?" The evident answer is, "No one". The sinner's suffering is unproductive and destructive.

Then the Bible secondly speaks of the carnal believer's suffering. In 1 Pet. 4: 15 Peter draws our attention to four kinds of carnal believers. "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". How plain and outspoken is Peter! Here are believers in affliction -all unnecessary. Here is an avoidable suffering but the believer in carnality exposes himself to these woes and sorrows.

Firstly, let none of you suffer as a murderer. 1 John 3: 15 settles the question as to who a murderer is: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer". Hatred is an emotion that may not find expression in angry words or murderous action. God judges you and me at the "seed level" of thought life. The police force and the court of justice have a list of recognizable and palpable offences. None of them ever enter, much less judge, one's thoughts or heart life. Our differences in background and temperaments bring friction in corporate life. We are not faulted for disagreeing with our brothers. Even Paul and Barnabas, Peter and Paul had their differences. God does not hold us faulty for disagreement but He certainly holds us guilty for harboring hatred, which is, but a first step to all other obnoxious evils of gossip, slander and evil scheming. We can never say who is right -whether Paul or Barnabas in the matter of John Mark. All that we learn from the Scripture is that the sharp contention led to a division and God advanced His cause through two missionary teams instead of one! In the end the same John Mark comes back to Paul as a useful instrument, for Paul wrote to Timothy, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Tim.4: 11). How often hatred, ill feeling in our hearts lead us to the character -assassination of others! Very often the battleground of mud slinging at each other is the sacred pulpit and the innocent congregation who suffer quiet martyrdom at the hand of the hate -filled preacher.

The first recorded murder is that of Cain who killed Abel. It was committed out of hatred; whereas God planned and neatly executed the offering of His beloved Son after centuries of planning. He was crucified on the Cross of Calvary to deliver sinners from the pit of corruption. Isaiah says, "...thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption" (38:17). The Scripture says, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph.5: 25). God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son! Such an act of love has no parallel.

All murders are committed out of hatred for human life and dignity. Some use weapons and others use words. Weapons inflict pain for a short time; words for a lifetime. "Thy tongue deviseth mischief's; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully" (Psa.52: 2). "...Sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword"(Psa.57:4). "Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who, say they, doth hear? But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them" (Psa.59: 7,8).Why? Psa.50: 19-22gives the answer. "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver". Sharp indictment indeed!

Think of Absalom and the way he discredited his own father .He presented his own father as an indifferent ruler. To everyone who sought help from the king, he met, embraced, kissed and said, "See, thy matters are good and right; but there is

no man deputed of the king 10 hear thee" (2 Sam.15: 3) and then immediately added, "Oh that I were made judge in the land that every man ...might come unto me, and I would do him justice! " (15:4). He stole the hearts by subtle conspiracy.

Think of the elder son in Luke 15:30. The father ran to meet the repentant son, received him into full fellowship and began to work on total restoration. That is the heart of a father. The elder son was so annoyed at the compassion of his father that he refused to go into the house, stayed on the street and shouted in every one's hearing: "...this thy son...which hath devoured thy living with harlots...". The elder brother's accusation was totally on assumption. He was unaware of the confession, repentance and cleansing of his brother. He chose to make public the sins of his brother. Beware how the story ends! The elder son outside the home! Many of us may not be guilty of the sins of the flesh, but how often we are guilty of the sins of the spirit! 2 Cor. 7: 1 exhorts us, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"!

Think also of Diotrephes in third John. Here is a "Me first" spiritual leader who threw his weight around in bloated self- importance. He was a self-styled dictator who loved preeminence and thus indulged in "prating " or using nonsensical words. He did such character -assassination of John the beloved apostle, that he poisoned others from accepting his leadership! This was the story of the first century church and the lot of the Apostle who walked with Christ.

Absalom, the unnamed elder son and Diotrephes often pass off as full - fledged lawful members of the Body of Christ. They act like cancer, eating away the vitality of the body and indulge in character -assassination. As to what happened to Diotrephes we are not told. About the elder son we are told that he remained outside the home and as for Absalom, the Bible tells us in 2 Sam. 14:25, "But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him!" How attractive is his physical history! How different was his spiritual history! Armed with hate and murder, evil speaking and subtlety, he exalted himself to be king and waged a war against his own father. His end! 2Sam.18: 10-17.Absalom riding on a mule got his head caught in the branch of an oak, hung between heaven and earth, and was shot through by three simple arrows. He was thrown like a despised log into a pit and a great heap of stones laid upon him. All Israel fled, everyone to his tent. With no mourners he departed most ignobly without being desired. Let no man, no Christian, suffer as a murderer!

In a lighter vein, someone defined life as nothing but entering into three rings. Firstly, the engagement ring; secondly, the wedding ring; thirdly, suffering. Suffering is an universal experience. It is unavoidable and inescapable. Going by Scripture and human experience we can discern three kinds of sufferers in this world. Firstly, those who suffer due to rebellion against God. Secondly, those who suffer because of their carnality. Peter describes in 1 Pet.4:15, four kinds of people who are believers but those who lost their intimacy with the Lord. Thirdly, those who suffer for their testimony

"...Let none of you suffer as a murderer" in 1 Pet.4: 15 was not addressed to unbelievers. We understand from 1 John 3:15 that hatred towards my brother in Christ is equated to murder. The second class of the carnal sufferers are those who are "thieves". "Let none of you suffer as a ...thief". A thief, by definition, is one who snatches away from another that which is not rightfully his.

On the Cross, Christ effected a legal transaction. Our sins were laid on Him and His righteousness is laid on every repentant, believing inner. God's righteousness is "imputed" to our account. (Rom.4: 24,25). We were at that very moment taken out from the first Adam and placed in the second Adam, Christ. Henceforth we are rooted IN Christ (Col.2: 7). Such a change in our "standing" brings us under the Lordship and ownership of Christ. It is impossible to bifurcate the Saviour-hood and Lordship of Christ. We cannot have one, without the other. Christ is called "the head" of the Church and also "the Savior" of the body (Eph.5: 23). What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. Let us not also reverse the order. "Headship" first, "Saviour-hood" next. Apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost, thundered, "...let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36)'. Prophetically, Isaiah spoke of the birth and ministry of the coming Messiah. Isa.9: 6,7 tells us this truth. Notice in verse seven His ministry, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end". Lordship and Saviour-hood. Headship and Saviour-hood. We enjoy His Saviour-hood only to the extent of the Lordship we allow Him over our lives.

Lordship speaks at once of ownership. At the Cross Christ bought us for Himself. To the elders at Ephesus Paul said in Acts 20:28. "...the church of God, which he purchased with His own blood". Reminding the Corinthians of this fact Paul wrote to say in 1 Cor.6: 20 and 7:23, "Ye are bought with a price", hence it is only our reasonable service to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God. (Rom.12: 1). Secondly, since "Christ hath suffered for us" we must no longer live the rest of our time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1 Pet.4: 1,2). When Paul asked the Corinthians, "What hast thou that thou did not receive"? (1 Cor.4: 7), he was urging the believers to acknowledge the fact that all their abilities, substance and the rest of it belonged to God. We are only stewards called upon to manage the property of another.

Samson, the anointed judge, failed in the matter of the stewardship of his body. Instead of using it for the deliverance of God's people he robbed it for his own pleasure. The man who received one talent in Matthew 25 robbed his master by wasting his master's time and talent. "Thou oughtest...to have put my money to the exchangers, and then...I should have received mine own with usury" was his charge in verse 27. He called him "wicked and slothful". We are called upon to honor the Lord with our substance and the first fruits of all our increase in Prov.3: 9. Why? So shall our "barns be filled with plenty"(3: 10). God may not ask each one of us to leave our nets as He did ask Peter, James and John but make sure He is the owner. Wise stewardship of our body, time, treasure and talents is our responsibility. Failure to do so amounts to "first class" robbery and many carnal believers suffer because of this.

"Let none of you suffer as an...evildoer" in 1 Pet.4: 15 refers to the third class of sufferers. A classic example of such unnecessary suffering comes to us through the life of King David. 2 Sam.23: 1, 2 tells us at least four things about him. He is the man who is raised up on high. Secondly, he is anointed of the God of Jacob. Thirdly, he is the sweet Psalmist of Israel and fourthly, the man whom the Spirit used to speak out His word. First Samuel 17, reveals to us the singular and spectacular way God used him to kill a lion, a bear in the forest and a mighty Goliath out in front of the Israelites and Philistines. Such physical and military victories brought him fame and royal connections.

Second Samuel 11 presents to us however, a different David. 2 Sam. 12 tells that God took cognizance of David's offence. He will not let go the offender scot-free. No citizen may call David an adulterer, a murderer, a schemer, a liar, a deceiver, a robber and an evildoer. They have his beautiful book -the published collection of soul stirring psalms. They will continue to honor and obey David. God saw this evildoer. He sent Nathan. Through Nathan God told David, "Thou art the man" (2 S.am.12: 7). David never wielded the sword but he monitored the sword of an Ammonite to fall upon his faithful general. How shameful and sorrowful was his life thereafter. God told him, "I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house". From 2 Sam. 12, we find tribulations and sufferings in the life of David. David paid a bitter price for being an evildoer.

First Peter 4: 15 also tells us about the sufferings which come to us for being a busybody in other men's matters. The "unholy curiosity", prying into the privacies of others is a common, growing disease. Even Peter who walked with the Lord and saw the risen Christ asked regarding John, "Lord, and what shall this man do"? (John 21: 21). The Lord's reply was a mild rebuke to the prying inquisitiveness of Peter. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me". In other words, Christ told Peter to mind his own business of fulfilling the terms of discipleship. The Lord is not answerable to us for the way He chooses to deal with others. As the Lord and Master, He reserves that privilege and prerogative to Himself. In the parable of the householder recorded in Matt.20, this was the exact problem. Instead of appreciating the generosity and magnanimity of "the good man" in paying all equally, the laborers -those who came early, murmured. The Master had to rebuke them. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" (20:15). To interfere in another's decision; is to meddle with others, inviting suffering.

Prov.26: 17 says, "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears". The gossipmonger, the talebearer is mentioned immediately after this verse. Some act as self -appointed free of service, data -base of other people's filth. You get their e-mail number, you log into them for the latest information. Four classes of believers who suffer unnecessarily - the murderer, the thief, the evildoer, and the busybody.

A Scripture-taught Christian would never asks, "Why am I suffering?", but would rather ask, "Am I suffering aright?". Suffering is of two kinds, coming to three classes of people. First one is destructive suffering. "The sinner in rebellion against God" sows seeds of self-destruction. Like the prodigal son who went astray in a spirit of rebellion and self-dependence, sinners find them selves amidst great shame, want and hunger. When the wayward boy realized his condition he cried out, "I perish with hunger". Isaiah tells us about the idolater, who left the true God, "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isa.44: 20).

The second class of sufferers are those who are born again but living a life of carnality. Their theoretical knowing has not become practical living. Their positional sanctification has not been worked out into practical sanctification. God has worked in His great salvation (Phil.2:13), but they have not "worked out" their salvation with fear and trembling. They have obtained "precious faith" as 2 Pet.1:1 tells us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. They are given exceeding great and precious promises (2 Pet.1 :4) but these, content with their initial experience have not given all diligence to add to their faith virtue; to their virtue knowledge; to their knowledge temperance; to their temperance patience; to their patience godliness; to their godliness brotherly kindness; to their brotherly kindness

charity. These things were not added and therefore they turned barren and unfruitful (2 Pet. 1 :5-8).

1 Pet.4:15 tells us about four such people. The murderer who engages in character -assassination in the Body of Christ; the thief who robs that which is of Christ for his personal ends; the evil-doer who schemes the downfall of others and the busybody who interferes in other men's matters. The prodigal son could also be an illustration of the back slidden believer. In fact, the son fits in more to a believer than an unbeliever. Notice where the fall began. It began when the son was in the house, with the servants, under the father. The sheep may be lost in the wilderness but the coin and the son were lost right within the house. Going by this chapter of Luke 15 and the three stories, two-thirds of the lost people seem to be inside God's House, than outside it. The percentage of the lost-ness is more inside the house than outside. One in a hundred lost in the wilderness, but one out of ten pieces of silver lost inside the house. The percentage of lost-ness in the wilderness is one percent, while in the house it is 10% and coming to the climax story of the prodigal son, the percent age of lost-ness is 50%. How shocking! We confront an unpleasant truth here. More believers are lost inside the Church than outside it. These three stories speak of three aspects of a believer's rebellion; the sheep through self righteousness, the coin through self -pity and the son through self-will. Isa.53:6 tells us that "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way". Prov.14:12 tells us why we turn to our own way. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death". Such a self-righteous believer is difficult to reach out. Ecclesiastes4:13 tells us, "Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished". Secondly, "self-pity" of the coin. The hiddenness in the dust, in the darkness, right within the house is not a mark of humility but a mark of depression and self-pity. Some have so many arguments to tell us why they do not like to involve in the ministry of the church, than they have for involvement. They prefer silent martyrdom to active involvement. Thirdly, "self- will". The younger son, lived with the father, ate the best food, was served constantly by the servants but he failed to appreciate these privileges as they came to him freely by birth. As days go by, we can get used to the blessings of God that we ignore Manna and crave for the leeks and onions of Egypt. As the father allowed the son to leave, God allows us in our mad course of self-will till we are back on the track saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against thee; I am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me one of thy hired servants". Such a suffering did not contribute to the development of the son or to the glory of the father.

The third class of sufferers are those blessed people who suffer for the right causes, bringing glory to God, blessing to others and rewards to themselves. Such a holy company suffer atleast for four important reasons and John the beloved apostle belonged to this holy company.

The Bible tells us clearly that as believers we pay a cost for following Christ. Matt.5:11 tells us, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake". Here is suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ. It is a guilt by association. The Man called Christ was "despised and rejected of men" (Isa.53:3). "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John1: 11). "For neither did his brethren believe in him" (John 7:5). Christ was the most controversial figure in the days of His earthly ministry. He had a few friends but innumerable enemies. Those who followed Him in the early days of ministry by looking at His miracles, walked no more with Him. John 6 speaks

to us about the miracle of the loaves, the multitude, who came seeking for Him, and also many disciples who went back and walked no more with Him (6:66}. The chapter ends with a note of the betrayer Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve. Forgotten by friends, deserted and betrayed by disciples. Christ trod the path of unpopularity alone. Such is the lot of every true Christian. There is yet to be born any other who lived so perfectly like Jesus of Nazareth. Yet His generation called Him "wine bibber and gluttonous" (Luke 7:34), a man beside himself (Mark 3:21 }, a man who had a devil (John 7:20), a man who is an upstart (John 1:4) who tried to project himself, and a deceiver (Matt.27:63). The Bible says that,"...none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would' not have crucified the Lord of glory!" (1 Cor.2:8).

To associate with such a Christ is to invite ridicule and rejection of this world. Christ said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18}. At the hour of trial Peter refused to own up his association with Christ. A damsel confronted Peter outside the palace to say; "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee". Peter said, "I know not what thou sayest"(Matt.26:69;70) Another maid said, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth". Peter denied with an oath," I do not know the man" (Matt.26:71 , 72).

Today is the hour of rejection for Christ. If we do not suffer with Him, we have no share tomorrow when He comes in royal splendor to be seated on the Throne. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2 Tim. 2:12). To be ashamed of Christ is to be ashamed of the words of Christ. Not everything that goes by the Name of Christ goes by the Word of Christ. The presence of 25000 Christian denominations should tell us that very few are Scripture-based. With newer cults surfacing in the horizon, the Word of God is either ignored or altered or added to, to nullify it. "Whosoever therefore shall be-ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his I Father with the holy angels"(Mark 8:38).

The end times is marked with a new wave of emotionalism that claims to glorify Christ. The "blessing-oriented" revival is of great acceptance everywhere. The "laughing" revival, the "vomiting" revival, have found good congregations. To keep the crowd coming, the preacher must exercise " great care to keep the cross-centered, self-denying Christianity in the background.

Christian faith is no longer something to be dreaded of. The disciples suffered, saints suffered, martyrs died their deaths. It is all in the past. Christianity now is very attractive. The change of heart, yielding of the will, cleansing of the conscience-well, these are not priorities. Come to Christ, love Christ-your diseases flee, problems get solved. John, the apostle knew of a different faith of a different Christ than the one commonly preached and presented today. His association with Christ saw him exiled to the lonely isle of Patmos. His brother James had an early martyr's death. Peter; had already been crucified, upside down. Stephen was stoned to death. Matthew was slain in Ethiopia. John Mark was dragged in the streets until he died. Philip was crucified and stoned. Why? All because, they chose to stay with Jesus. Blessed are those who suffer for His sake and for His Word's sake.

Every true Christian suffers for a cause. While suffering that comes to us through rebellion would prove detrimental, that which comes because of submission would always be developmental. While we cannot escape suffering in this sinful and wicked world, it must be our goal to suffer aright for the right reasons. We cannot

escape the yoke in life. If we escape the yoke of Christ, we end up under the yoke of the world. Christ told the multitudes, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11: 30). Christ never minimized the cost to recruit more followers. Here is a candid statement to those who would accept gladly the yoke of Christ. It is going to be easy and light in comparison to what the world would offer.

Unfortunately many would not believe this proposition. The arch-deceiver has poisoned many, even the very elect, to believe that the yoke of Christ is hard. Sin appears so attractive. Yet, as Sadhu Sundar Singh said, "One would discover at the end of his life that the yoke of Christ is far lighter than the yoke of the world". A Christian knows why he suffers. Matthew 5:11 speaks of suffering for Christ's sake. The second justifiable reason for suffering is found in Matt.5:10,"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".

John the Baptist was one such man. Herod Antipas the governor, wickedly coveted Herodias the wife of Philip, his brother. John condemned him for this and Herod knew that John spoke the truth. John told him fearlessly, "It is not lawful for thee to have her"(Matt.14: 4). Herodias who detested John had him arrested and finally persuaded Herod to have him killed. John paid a price for the sake of righteousness. It is increasingly becoming difficult for true Christians to survive in the modern society. Bribery, deception, exploitation are accepted as norms today in business and governmental transactions. A Christian gladly pays the cost knowing that in heaven he has "a better and an enduring substance" (Heb.10: 34). The writer of Hebrews gave this promise to those who endure a great fight of afflictions and reproaches.

The third noble reason is to suffer for the Gospel's sake (Mark 10:29,30). Jesus said, "...There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29,30). Suffering for His sake and the Gospel's. The Christian Gospel centers in the person of Christ. With Paul we stand up to say, we preach "Christ, and him crucified"(1 Cor.2: 2). Salvation is centered in the finished work of the person of Christ on the Cross of Calvary .The means to obtain it is by faith. Biblical faith is always a sequel to Biblical repentance. Therefore, the link is Repentance, Faith, and Salvation. The objective of faith and salvation is "holiness" of life.

The true Biblical Gospel demands repentance that is evidenced by a change of life. This change of life is the result of a change of basic motivation in living. Why do I get saved? The right answer to this question decides whether I have received the right Gospel or not. A man of God wrote; "There are basically two master dispositions in the world. There is the mind of Christ, which is the mind of a servant and is characterized by selflessness: and there is the mind of Satan characterized by selfishness. One is controlled by the will of God and oriented towards God's interests. The other is controlled by self-will and oriented towards self's interest".

Fourthly the Christian accepts suffering for the elect's sake. Paul in 2 Tim.2: 10 wrote,"...I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory". Paul longed to present "every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col.1: 28). Paul longed to die in Christ for it was a gain to him. He had a desire to depart. "Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil.1: 24) was one of his reasons to remain on earth.



Jeremiah faithfully proclaimed God's word to God's elect people for forty years though he met with little success. All this while he endured from the apostate Judah, opposition, beatings and imprisonment. When Jeremiah ministered to the Jews in Palestine, Ezekiel ministered to the exiles in Babylon. He prophesied for at least twenty-two years faithfully for the restoration and blessing of God's people.

Moses stood and suffered for the elect people of God. Heb.11: 24 tells us that Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Moses gave up the lucrative royal position of ruler ship in the Egyptian palace to identify himself with the despised nation of slaves.

His sacrifice and suffering were least under-stood, much less appreciated by God's people Israel. They provoked him by their words. They decided even to stone him, elect a new captain and turn back to Egypt. The sufferings of Moses came, not mainly due to Pharaoh and the Egyptians but due to the people whom he sought to serve sacrificially-the elect Israel of God, yet he stood to serve them faithfully.

Suffering for the Son of man's sake (Matt.5:11), for Righteousness' sake (Matt.5:10), for Gospel's sake (Mark 10:29), and for the elect's sake (2 Tim.2:10) are glorious reasons to suffer for. Paul and John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Moses-who suffered tribulation may not have got their rewards in this present generation but Christ is coming to show the difference "between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not"(Mal.3: 18).