

29 08 21

Afflictions Pt 2 Endure affliction for Christ's sake

This is our second study on the word "affliction" in the scriptures. In our previous study we established (1) the Lord chose Israel in the furnace of affliction, (2) the Lord afflicted Israel because of their sin, and (3) many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. In this study we establish – (1) Bonds and afflictions abode with the early church, (2) afflictions are a great trial, and (3) Christians are to watch in all things and endure afflictions.

Our three points established from the scriptures –

1. Bonds and afflictions abode with the early church

"Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me" (Acts 20:23).

The early church received the word of God in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost

"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thes.1: 6).

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church out of much affliction and anguish of heart
"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you" (2 Cor.2: 4).

The Lord delivered Paul out of all of his afflictions and persecutions that he endured
"Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me" (2 Tim.3: 11).

Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for the brethren, and even sort more afflictions of Christ in his flesh for the body's sake (the church).

"If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. 1:23 & 24).

2. Afflictions are a great trial

"How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (2 Cor.8: 2).

Afflictions, necessities and distresses approve us as ministers of God – "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses" (2 Cor.6: 4).

Afflictions are a great fight – "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions" (Heb.10: 32).

3. Christians are to watch in all things and endure afflictions

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim.4:5).

When we endure afflictions the sufferings of Christ abound

“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation” (2 Cor.1: 5 & 6).

Christians endure a “light affliction” which works for us an exceeding weight of eternal glory

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor.4: 17).

We are to be an example of suffering, affliction and patience as the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord

“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience” (Jas.5: 10).

Illustration

Affliction takes on many forms –

- * Taliban took over Afghanistan so Christians will know what it means to be afflicted.
- * Those who preached Christ in Tokoroa 25–30 years ago and found themselves in front of a judge – would have known what it means to suffer affliction for Christ.
- * COVID 19 today puts trials and afflictions on Christian households.
- * afflictions from Satan who walks about seeking whom he may devour 1 Pet.5: 7–9.

Question to think about.

What can we do for those in the body of Christ that suffer affliction?

Answer from the scriptures

Partake in the afflictions of our brethren as Christ suffered to partake in ours

“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted...And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.” (2 Cor.1: 5–7).

Comfort the afflicted concerning their faith that they be not moved in their afflictions

“And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto” (1 Thes.3:2 & 3). See also 1 Thes.3: 7.

We are to “visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction” – to do so is “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father...” (Jas.1: 27).

We are to pray – “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray...” (Jas 5:13).

We are to weep with them – “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness” (Jas.4: 9). C.f.– Rom.12: 15– “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep”.

We can only partake in the afflictions of our brethren, comfort them, visit them, pray for them and weep with them – if we communicate with them – Phil.4:14

“Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction”.

Be mindful of each other. Pray for those who are suffering affliction, communicate with them, endure affliction yourself, and remember – that our “light affliction” is an example of suffering, and works for us an exceeding weight of eternal glory!