

THE GIFT OF LONG SUFFERING

“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.” (Philippians 1:29)

To have the gift of patience and long suffering - this is the experience of almost everyone who receives the Good News that Jesus, the Son of God, came down from heaven, became man and suffered on the cross to give men eternal life. Every man who believes shall be saved and is assured of new and eternal life. He who walks in the newness of life at first receives joy and peace, the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the grace to believe and to live in the joy of the Lord that gives peace and strength continues. The relationship between the new man and God goes on deeper and deeper. This is expressed by the assurance that God is not only near but as well He is living within. The new man felt that God listens to His prayers. As he talks to him He answers. When God speaks, he listens and recognizes God's voice. He really feels God's real presence and assurance of God's promises to his life. The new man receives from God the right decision and comfortable counsel. God is there in the midst of his trouble; helping him, rescuing him and delivering him. Such assurance of security guards the man's relationship with God and encourages him to be in deeper love and respect to the Lord Jesus. It also increases the new man's desire to give and offer service and sacrifice to God each day. This changes is expressed among the people around who noticed how the new man is so faithful and loving to God; measured by how much he gives his time, effort and resources to his service for the Lord. By this way God is glorified not only in the new man's life, but also in the eyes and mind of those people who are away from God. And this is the dynamic: the joy and peace of salvation drives the new man to do good deeds that motivates other people to glorify God in heaven. *"In the same way let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:16)

On the other hand, shall the relation between you and God stop unto the point of suffering? By no means not! God's great love to us through the sacrifice of His own Son Jesus and His death for our sin will continue to remind us and will work through us beyond what we expect and imagine. The ministry of giving back to God will go on beyond and without limit. This drive will be at work in us even in times of suffering and in times of trouble. It will not only sustain us but as well it will motivate us to continue our walk with God, following the steps of Jesus until He comes to bring us to His kingdom in heaven. The Spirit of God will help us to continue to persevere to praise God even in times of great distress, while we are on the bed of sickness, while we are persecuted, imprisoned, rejected, mocked, or threatened to death. At any rate, such praises to God proclaim by his people who are passing through difficult situation will give glory to God and will confirm to the people around that our Lord Jesus is a true and living God who deserves all praises at all times, especially for the wonderful gift of long-suffering that He builds in us.

In the same way, a brother having the gift of long-suffering will also keep us going as we find that while he suffers more, his suffering strengthens his relationship with God and not become a source of weakness. **“What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:8)** This is beyond imagination but it is the truth. He who believed and knew who really Jesus Christ is, is willing to give up everything he has and eager to receive the gift that God promised. **“Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts2: 38)** A gift from God is something that a man freely receives, which is beyond his capability and skill, which enables him to be with God and to serve God. A committed servant of God usually depicts the gift of long-suffering. ***For it has been granted to him on behalf of Christ not only to believe but also to suffer;***

1. ***Long-suffering from chronic physical illnesses*** - like paralysis, blindness or any chronic pain in certain body parts.
2. ***Singleness, widowhood or marital separation*** – which are unpleasant situations to many, but God knows how to sustain, strengthen and mold those who call to Him, so even in such situation they still can praise Him.
3. ***Persecution*** – which may be in the form of rejection, losing job and material possession, physical abuse, imprisonment or death. Those who proclaim the message of salvation -that Jesus died on the cross to give eternal life to those who believe- oftentimes experience persecutions but they become more zealous in sharing the Gospel for they obey God rather than man.
4. ***Fasting*** – the joy of keep the stomach empty while seeking the Lord's guidance and favour and for the sake of others is another manifestation of the gift of long-suffering.
5. ***Carry others' burden*** - helping and supporting others may drive him to forget even his own benefits, having the concern to serve others and to honour God.

This message is not just to remind us that, **"When times are good be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future."** (Ecclesiastes 7: 14) The message does not only mean what Job was saying to his wife, **"You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble? In all this, Job did not sin in what he said."** (Job 2:10)

My dear and beloved: Significantly, the theme of this message is to confirm to you the will of God and to assure you that if you are suffering you are blessed, and you are in the right place and perfect situation, **"For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him."** (Philippians 1:29)

"I praise You, my Father in heaven. I will sing of your mercies forever. With my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations. You who lift up my soul in my affliction and enable me to praise and honour You in front of the people, that your name be glorified forever and ever, Amen!"