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SUFFERING SAINTS

BY: C. D. COLE

"But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy," I Peter 4:13.

INTRODUCTION: One of the most patent facts in human experience is the fact of suffering. Since the day sin separated between God and man, the human race has been a suffering race. Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. There is no land nor people who do not know the meaning of tears. Suffering is both physical and mental. Medical science has done much to relieve pain of body, but mental suffering is on the increase, broken hearts are more plentiful than ever. Our mental patients do not get the sympathy and attention that physical patients get. Nor are they as easy to cure and care for.

Suffering is no respecter of persons. Pain and sorrow are found in the palace and in the hovel; among the rich and poor; among the lost and the saved.

Becoming a Christian is no guarantee against suffering. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. Being a child of God does insure against eternal suffering, and being saved does change the design and results of trouble.

Much suffering in this world is deserved. It is often a case of reaping what one has sown. A wild reckless life of debauchery will bring ruin and sorrow.

Much suffering is the direct and indirect result of sin. Violation of natural law brings a lot of suffering both to the saint and the sinner. And violation of moral law issues in suffering. Paul tells us that many of the Corinthians were weak, and ill, and some had died, because they failed to discern the Lord's body in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. They were not stricken because of violation of any law of health, they had not been poisoned by what

they ate and drank, but in dealing with them, the Lord, by means not explained, afflicted them. The illness and death of many people cannot be explained on natural grounds.

Peter discusses suffering that is undeserved; suffering that is not the result of sin; suffering that cannot be traced to any particular sin or class of sins. Suffering saints is the theme of his epistles. Valuable lessons are to be had from his discussions.

One purpose in suffering is the trial of our faith. *"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ,"* I Peter 1:7. Peter says we rejoice on the prospect of complete salvation, but now for a little while you may have to suffer various troubles, so that the genuineness of your faith may be redound to praise and glory and honor at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Suffering both proves and improves our faith. Peter likens this suffering to the refining of gold. God is likened to a finer of silver and gold. *"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness,"* Malachi 3:2-3. *"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: 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,"* Zechariah 13:9.

One of the most valuable possessions anyone can have is faith in God and faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour. And the

trial of this faith is still more precious. Gold and other minerals as they come from the ground are mixed with impurities and must be refined to separate them from the impurities. And our faith is like that. Faith is the creation of God, and it lies in our souls, it is mixed with fleshly impurities. And suffering is the crucible, the fire of God by which it is improved. It is proved and found genuine; it is improved and it redounds to honor and praise and glory when Christ comes.

Suffering is the will of God. It is His purpose that we suffer. *"For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing,"* I Peter 3:17. *"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator,"* I Peter 4:19. Doing right results in suffering as we are doing wrong.

Suffering is a gracious privilege. *"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,"* Philippians 1:29. Faith is the gift of God and the trial of faith is God's gift also. It is given us not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him. We are saved for His sake, we ought to be willing to suffer for His sake.

Patience in suffering for right is acceptable with God. There is no credit for patient suffering in doing wrong, but to take it patiently when you suffer for doing right is to have God's approval. Patience does not mean that it is not painful, there is no suffering where there is no pain. I have suffered quite a bit from cutting tongues and false charges. If I refuse to be hurt by it and do not suffer, there is no divine approval, and if I complain and brood over it, there is

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FOR JESUS SAKE

BY: C. D. COLE

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake,” II Corinthians 4:5.

Christianity is something more than a system of ethics; it is attachment to a person, who is at once the object of trust and the power of an endless life. *“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life,” I John 5:12. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me,” Galatians 2:20. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,” Philippians 1:21. This person is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” Acts 4:12. The practical value of our religion is measured by our love to Christ.*

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see

through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity,” I Corinthians 13:1-13.

“For Jesus' sake,” and equivalent phrases often occur in the New Testament. May the Lord bless us in the study of this expression.

1. The Scriptures teach that it is for Christ's sake that God has saved us. *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you,” Ephesians 4:32. “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake,” I John 2:12. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,” Ephesians 1:7. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,” Colossians 1:14. Christ is the meritorious cause of everything that has been done for us. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Romans 8:32.*

2. The Scriptures teach that everything we do should be done for Jesus' sake. *“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men,” Colossians 3:23. Anything that cannot be done for the sake of Jesus should not be done. Can you dance for Jesus' sake? Can you play cards for Jesus' sake? “For Jesus' sake,” is the criterion of all real success. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake,” Matthew 5:11.*

3. The motive of doing things for Jesus sake gives us a power that nothing else can give. Men can do things for Jesus' sake that they cannot do from any other motive. I have heard a pastor tell of trying to reconcile two brothers in the church. One of them resisted every appeal to forgive his brother until the pastor asked him to do it for Christ's sake. This appeal broke his stubbornness and subdued his rebellious spirit. Think of the things the Apostle Paul did as a minister of Christ. *“Of the Jews five times received I forty*

stripes save one,” II Corinthians 11:24. “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong,” II Corinthians 12:10. He gives us the power of such a life.

4. We learn from the Scriptures some of the things we are to do for Christ's sake.

a. We are to practice forgiveness towards one another for Christ's sake. *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you,” Ephesians 4:32. “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye,” Colossians 3:13.*

b. We are to be missionaries for Christ's sake. *“Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles,” III John 7.*

c. We ought to be willing to lose our lives for Christ's sake. *“He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it,” Matthew 10:39. To lose one's life means to sacrifice all human rewards and earthly comforts. This is to be done for Christ's sake. “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,” Philippians 1:29.*

SALVATION

BY: C. D. COLE

Salvation is the most important word ever uttered and yet how meaningless it is to the masses who are absorbed with the thought of food and raiment and pleasure, during their brief stay on this earth.

Salvation; the greatest blessing that can possibly come to a human soul, and without which it would be better never to have been born, and yet the most neglected thing in the world today. Salvation the blessed gift of God, paid for by His darling Son, and yet that which conceited men think they can earn with their own puny hands.

WHAT IS SALVATION?

Salvation means soundness and safety. The opposite of a saved state is to be unsound and to be in peril. There is the double thought of sickness and danger in sin. Sin is both a disease and a crime. Sin as a disease has to do with our nature, it is a state of being. As a crime it has to do with our position or standing before God as a transgressor of His law. Salvation is deliverance from the curse of God's law and also deliverance from a sinful nature.

SALVATION FROM THE GUILT OF SIN

1. Instantaneous; *"The moment a sinner believes and trusts in the crucified Son, His pardon at once he receives, salvation in full through His blood."*

2. It rests upon the substitutionary death of Christ. *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,"* II Corinthians 5:21. *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,"* Galatians 3:13. *"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed,"* I Peter 2:24. *"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,"* Isaiah 53:5-6.

3. It is eternal. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life,"* John 5:24. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life,"* John 6:47. *"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,"* Hebrews 10:14.

4. It is the gift of God. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of your-*

selves: it is the gift of God," Ephesians 2:8. *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,"* Romans 6:23.

Salvation from the guilt of sin is called justification. This means that there is nothing against us in the sight of the law. The law inflicted punishment for our sins on the body of Christ.

SALVATION FROM THE NATURE OF SIN

1. It is progressive. It is not done in an instant, but is a process. It begins in the new birth, in babyhood and ends in the glorification of the body. You can grow in the grace of sanctification, you can become more and more sanctified, but you cannot become more justified.

2. It is certain of accomplishment. *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,"* Philippians 1:6. *"For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall,"* Proverbs 4:16. *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is,"* I John 3:2.

3. There is a group of scriptures which give us the two contrasted conditions of believers and unbelievers, as processes going on in the present, but not complete. *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God,"* Acts 2:47; *"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved,"* I Corinthians 1:18.

In these passages the human race is divided into two classes: "Them that are being saved and them that are perishing." The condition of neither class is said to be fixed or complete. There is the thought of progressiveness. Some are being saved; others are perishing. The climax of neither state will be reached until the resurrection. No man is what he ultimately will be. Believers are progressing towards a condition of complete sinlessness, utter soundness and glorious health; while unbelievers are progressing towards a deterioration that is indescribable. The climax of being saved is to be conformed to the likeness of Christ; but who can say what the climax of a perishing state will be as to the actual state of the man? In either case there will be meetness for environment, every man will be fitted for the place where he is to go. Heaven is a prepared place for the prepared people of God; there will be a pre-

pared place for the devil and his angels.

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no divine approval. We can serve God by patience in suffering as well as by painful toil.

We are not to think it strange that a saint suffers. If a saint is not willing to suffer for Christ's sake, he is not willing to take up his cross and follow Christ. Our Lord was the only man who did absolutely right on this earth and He suffered its crown and cross. How can we expect to be where He was and do right without receiving cuffs and crosses?

When we are suffering for doing good, we have a partnership with Christ. If we share His sufferings we shall also share His glory. To be reproached for the name of Christ is to be blessed. *"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake,"* Matthew 5:11.

This suffering will only be for a season. *"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you,"* I Peter 5:10. *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,"* II Corinthians 4:17. *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,"* Romans 8:18. Does it pay to be a Christian? Not if this present life in this sinful world is all there is. *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,"* I Corinthians 15:19. To know whether there is personal profit in being a Christian, anticipate the day of judgment and then you will see a vast difference between the saint and the sinner.

"Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord, Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not," Malachi 3:13-18.