

Hallmarks of the Transformed Life Living “In a world of hurt”

Intro: Years ago I was working in a training program with the Westview church in Murfreesboro as a college student. During the week we sometimes would have Bible studies with people in the community using the Dave Bradford Bible study guide. The idea behind the study was to ask a question and then turn to a Bible verse that answers it. I remember on one occasion studying one of the lessons with a family and there was a young lad present. As we went through the verses we came upon Romans 12:12 in our lesson. Without even turning to the Bible he quoted these verses as if they had been a long time acquisition of his memory:

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer (Romans 12:12)

rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, (Romans 12:12)

I could wish that every person had these verses permanently etched into memory; for they could help us a great deal as we go through life. Paul is showing us a portrait of the transformed life. In these verse Paul shows us three things about the transformed disciple:

The transformed disciple accepts the inevitability of suffering for the sake of Christ!

The word “tribulation” refers to trouble that is accompanied by suffering. All Christians must face the difficulties that befall all humanity; but we must also face the opposition and persecution of the world.

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. (John 15:18)

Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you. (1 John 3:13) strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22)

Can we accept these statements of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus?

Lenski’s comments are particularly poignant:

“In the early church affliction was expected as a matter of course; the scars it left were considered medals of honor, bestowed by the Lord’s own hands. Now, most Christians expect to get through unscathed, without even a bruise, and they cry out if they are buffeted a little, as though a great wrong were being done them instead of experiencing something that is altogether normal. So many even try to avoid the world’s hate and to win its favor by shaping doctrine, practice, conduct so as to avoid offending the world. So many Christians resemble the children of this world to such an extent that they cannot be distinguished from them” (Lenski, Commentary on Romans, 1936).

The transformed disciple uses the resources of faith that God has made available to him.

Glorious Hope

All that we endure here gives way to something better!

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:16-18)

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

Steadfast Prayer

As regards prayer--continuing steadfast

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises. (James 5:13)

The transformed disciple overcomes tribulation with joy and perseverance.

There will be joy rather than despair!

As regards hope—rejoicing

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; (Romans 5:3-4)

To the extent that we recognize tribulation for what it is, a sign of our own salvation and a share in the sufferings of Christ, then we can rejoice that there is enough of the Lord in us to make someone who opposes the Lord want to oppose us!

Here we have the wonderful example of the apostles, who did it right! (They acknowledged their lot as followers of Christ. They humbly took their needs to God and kept doing right. And thus...)

So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:41)

There will be perseverance rather than worldly resistance!

As regards tribulation--bearing under!

The Revelation of Jesus Christ was sent to the church in tribulation.

One of its key statements is found in Rev. 13:10.

If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints. (Revelation 13:10)

The message is clear. In times of suffering, we must not resort to the world's methods of opposition to evil, but instead we must accept our lot in faith that God's cause will ultimately prevail. In this truth resides the faith and perseverance of the saints!

The transformed disciple knows that no matter what he must surrender for the sake of Christ, it does not matter, for his faithful endurance will be rewarded far beyond his efforts.

Conclusion: I don't know what the future holds for any of us. All around we can see signs of escalating hostility against the religion of Christ and those who practice it. Who knows what the future holds? But in the meantime don't let the inevitable animosity of unbelievers intimidate you or cause you to despair. Instead, acknowledge it as a sign of your salvation and show others that you have learned to encounter life's tribulations with joy, perseverance, and reliance upon the Lord!