

The Gospel Herald

“As the truth is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21)

For The LORD’S PILGRIMS, STRANGERS & SOJOURNERS

by
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A Man of Constant Sorrows

“Surely He (Christ) hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted”

Isaiah 53:4

My dear brethren, I imagine that over time you have heard upon an occasion the old mountain bluegrass song “A man of constant sorrows.” I can personally attest of being in the dire straights of the depth of mental depression to the point all joy, peace, and happiness of life appeared to be gone, this is not something uncommon to mankind especially in the day in which we live with one in ten Americans taking an anti-depressant medication. The writers of old would call it “melancholy”, a depression of spirit, a pensive mood, sadness of doom and gloom in heart, a helpless, and often hopeless feeling. Many of Gods people have wandered through this life of sin and woe with these feelings of desperation and lowliness.

I recall in the life of the Reformer Martin Luther, after his revelation of “justification by faith alone,” and his nailing of the ninety-five thesis upon the door of the Catholic meeting house, he was rejected of all those he held near and dear in times past as a Catholic monk and one who sought fellowship among those that sought to know God in a deeper and more personal way. Yet the truth of the gospel of salvation totally “by grace alone” caused him to be excommunicated from that religious order with which he was associated, and he was commanded to recant by the high church by Pope Leo the Tenth. He was a man sought to be persecuted by any and all that had known the Catholic monk from that day on. He was hidden from those that sought to kill him by his dear friend Prince Fredrick the wise in a remote castle for over a year.

During this time, history records Luther was plunged into deep depression with feeling of great despair and rejection, yet he knew the truth had set him free of the bondage of salvation by the works and efforts of man and the wicked schemes of the Papacy. Yet in time God moved upon Luther’s heart to translate the Holy Writ into German (1521) which brought about a great religious revolution among the masses as he proclaimed freedom from Papal dominance to FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE. This was the birth of Protestantism. Though Martin Luther was an anti-revolutionary and a non-violent

character, many thousands were killed over the revolution against the Roman Hierarchy triggered by the revelation of truth brought to the common folk by the German Bibles exposure. It was 1546 when Martin Luther finished his course in this time world, as known by history. In time God had brought John Calvin the Puritan upon the scene to succeed Luther in his attempts to proclaim the FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE and salvation was a matter of grace and grace alone (although as history records both Luther and Calvin brought with them some traits of the Roman church with them which tainted the purity of their Protestantism).

Men whom God raised up to fulfill His divine purpose in manifesting the various segments of truth over time were imperfect in their efforts and shall always be as mortals which only “see through a glass darkly”. For we ONLY see as we are shown the divine truths of Gods Holy Writ and His sovereign workings among the human race of mankind.

I have labored the point of Luther’s life mainly to demonstrate the path of “melancholy” that God’s people are often called to endure in their journey in this mortal realm here below. I reflect upon the song writer William Cowper who was used of God to pen many beautiful hymns and poetry in the mid 1700’s that are even sung today from the Old School hymnals. Cowper suffered greatly in his life with bouts of melancholy and depression to the point that he tried (you notice “**tried**”) to commit suicide upon three occasions and was committed to an institution for the insane on a few occasions. Yet through it all God had chosen this vessel of grace to walk down this dark pathway of insanity and melancholy to fulfill the Almighty’s determined sovereign will and good pleasure. Have we forgotten that we are “mere clay,” and that HE alone is the grand Master Potter? Who taketh from ONE lump and makes the vessels fit for His divine and sovereign purpose.

Oh! beloved heir of free and sovereign grace, has not our beloved Saviour experienced the dregs of rejection, depression, anxiety, and fear as he faced the cross of which He was ordained to bear? Oh! He cried, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And **being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground**” (Luke 22:42-44).

I ask, has the God man Christ our sovereign Head tasted of every experience and affliction which we shall experience in this mortal realm? “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in ALL points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

Does our Saviour know of our infirmities, sorrows, rejection, disappointments, discouragements? Has he actually tasted ALL these aspects of the human creature? I say yes, he has been every where we are called to tread !!! and because He is God HE was victorious over ALL things of which he was subject. Shall He not comfort us in the

time of need? Shall He forsake His own? NO. He shall only allow us to be kept in the furnace of affliction (whether in body, mind or soul) till we be ready to be brought forth as likened unto pure gold. Yes, beloved of God the dross of this mortal life from time to time must be removed as our Master Potter sees fit that we might be used more effectively for the glory and praise of His glorious name.

I conclude with this little analogy. A stately gentleman walked by a potter's shop in center of a little town in England gazing at the beautiful pieces of the master Potters handiwork and was impressed with the precise work and perfect appearance of a teacup which stood out to his eye. He was amazed at its beautiful color, pinstriping, and glossy glazing. He began to fanaticize in his mind what the little teacup must have endured to become such a beautiful vessel. His mind was caught up with these thoughts; "Oh! says the little cup as it was being massaged by the Potters gentle and tender hands, how wonderful to be chosen from the vast container of clay to be used to be formed by the master potter."

As the master Potter continued to manipulate the clay into the precise cup of which his mind desired, the clay began to say, "oh I am becoming sore with the squeezing and forming being done to me"!! as the master Potter continued to mold the little cup to his expectations, he observed it closely to see if it met his intended design. Yes, says the master Potter, this is fine, now I shall "fire" it to harden its clay to hold its perfect shape. Then the master Potter took the little clay teacup and placed it within the "firing oven." "Oh! says the little clay cup, what is this heat I feel? Oh, I am being baked!! I shall surely crumble into powder!" As the oven was reaching its required temperature the little cup says, "I shall never make it through this terrible "firing." "Oh! the heat! Oh, please master potter, take me out! Please take out from this intense heat! The master potter looked in the oven and watched his clock and said to himself, "no, not yet; it is not enough time to fully cure the clay to its intended hardness, a little while longer." Just as the little teacup had felt it had come to the place of destruction.....The master potter opened the door to the oven, and said "Oh, how wonderful, and fit for my continued work." Then the little teacup said, "Whew, I thought I would never endure such terrific heat and tempering!" Then the master potter took the little teacup and painted it to his desired color and again placed the little cup into the oven to cure the lacquer to harden it that it would be very resilient and shiny. "Oh! says the little teacup, I shall not endure such "firing" again, Oh, please master potter don't place me any longer in the firing oven!" Then the master potter placed the little cup once again in the firing oven to cure is beautiful finish. The little teacup had to be fired just for a season to cure its beautiful lacquered finish as designed per the master potter. The little teacup upon exposure once again to the intense heat of the firing oven, "Cried out, oh! please master potter rescue me from this unbearable heat and suffering," as the master potter looked at his watch and then again opened the door of the oven, the little teapot was once again spared and relieved from then trial of the firing furnace oven. Now the master Potter gazed upon the little teacup with a smile and satisfaction of his intended design and said, "I shall pinstripe this little teacup with gold lines to highlight its beautiful glossy finish." The master potter proceeded to take his thin horse hair striping brush and

dipped into the liquid gold and laid some beautiful lines upon the perimeter of the little teacup and on its little handle, to his delight. Now, says the master potter, "I must bake the gold stripes as the final preparation to make this little teacup a vessel fit for display and its intended use."

"Oh! again cries out the little teacup, I cannot endure the firing oven another time!" I shall surely be destroyed by its heat upon another occasion."

The dear master potter places gently into the firing oven one final time the little teacup to be fit for the master potter's use; again, within the oven the little teacup cried out "Oh! master potter what have I done to deserve such anguish and intense heat from the firing oven"? At just the designated time the master potter, turned down the heat, opened the oven door and removed the little teacup for its last and final time. The master potter held the little tea cup up and gazed at its beautiful appearance and thought to himself, **now the little teacup is fit for the master potter's use,** and in his delight set it in the window of the potter's store that all might see the handy work and talents of the **Master Potter.**

This dear friend is what we must endure to be used for the great Master Potter's use! We must be brought through the trials of life whether through physical affliction, mental anguish, depression of mind, discouragement, disappointment and even doubts of spiritual deliverance, through it all we shall be overcomers as Gods beloved heirs of grace that we might be used as trophies of grace fit for the heavenly Master's use!

For our sufferings in this time present world are just for a season as determined and ordained of our Sovereign God, yea, a small season compared to eternity of which we have been given a HOPE that it shall be ours to behold, yes life everlasting, free from sin and suffering to see HIM as He is high and lifted up among us to be worshipped forever without end.

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