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Chosen to Suffer for His Glory

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Abstract

Have you ever wondered why God's people suffer? Is suffering a result of sin? Does God have a purpose in our suffering? What does it mean to be chosen by God to suffer for His glory? Pick up your cross, turn the page and you will find the answers to these questions and more.

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Introduction

Suffering is viewed by many as punishment from God as a result of sin. The word of God clearly states in Deutoronomy the curses that will come upon us if we do not obey the Lord.[1] However, as we have seen in the life of Job, suffering is not always a result of sin, but used as a tool by God to accomplish His plans and purposes here on earth. When chosen by God, we will suffer for his Glory.

[1] Deutoronomy 28:15-68, KJV

Chosen to suffer for His glory

The Callings of God

In order to comprehend this, we must first understand what the callings of God are and the difference between being “called” and being “chosen”. There are three types of callings: The call to salvation, the call to sanctification and the call to service.[2]

Think of the callings of God as rock climbing (Jesus is the rock). When we answer the initial call of salvation, we climb up on the rock of Jesus. We can stay where we are or climb higher on the rock, going higher in God. This is achieved when we choose to answer His calls to sanctification and service. The calls of sanctification and service are a progressive process that will continue as long as we say “Yes” to God, until we go home to be with Him.

The Call to Salvation

God’s first call is the call to salvation and is given to all who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”. (John 3:16, KJV). It is a gift from God made accessible to us through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. God has given us all free will and it is a choice we make to accept or reject this eternal gift from God.

The Call to Sanctification

The second calling of God is sanctification. It is a call to holiness. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans: “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God”. (Romans 12:1-2, KJV). As my pastor said in a sermon years ago, “God is not concerned about happiness. He’s concerned about Holiness”.

[2] Dr Charles Stanley, "Print. " Christian Living Resources, Jesus Christ, Bible Study, Faith in God.
<http://www.crosswalk.com/print/11651368/>

The Call to Service

The third call of God is the call to service. Our first and foremost act of service is to worship the Lord. When we worship Him, we are ministering to Him. Out of that place of worship, we will minister to others, serving them. Deuteronomy says, "At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day." (Deuteronomy 10:8, KJV).

The call to service is also partnering with God, doing His work throughout the world, serving others in thought, word and deed. 1 Peter 4:11 says, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4: 11, KJV)

Difference between Called and Chosen

We are all called by God but not all are chosen. Those who answer the call of God are the chosen ones of God. Many of the Israelites did not answer the call of God for redemption in the wilderness. However, Joshua, Caleb and others did. They answered the call of God, choosing to follow Him. God said, "Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward shall see the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob because they have not wholly followed me: Save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, the Kenezite, and Joshua, the son of Nunn: for they have wholly followed the Lord." (Numbers 32:11-12, KJV). Jesus said, "For many are called but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:14, KJV).

The Glory of God

Now that we understand the callings of God and the difference between called and chosen, let's examine the glory of God. What exactly is the glory of God? The glory of God is part of whom He is. The word, glory, comes from the Hebrew word, "kabod", meaning "weight, honor, and glory.

[3]. The glory of God is, "a revelation of His nature and attributes." [4]

[3] "Hebrew and Aramaic Terms: Word Meanings for Old Testament Theology and Study".
www.crivoice.org/terms/wordhebrew.html

[4] Alexander John. "The Glory of God-Part I." The Glory of God-Part I.
www.cfsandiego.org/media/Glory_of_God_Part1.pdf

Suffering Reveals the Glory of God

At times, it is the will of God we suffer for His glory. The measure in which we suffer is deemed by God for His ultimate plans and purposes. Any purpose of suffering by God is motivated out of love. The Apostle John wrote, "He that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is love." (John 4:8, KJV). If we are willing to suffer for Him, His glory (His nature and attributes) is revealed to us in our circumstances, in us and through us. I Peter says, "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." (1 Peter 4:19, KJV)

Two Types of Suffering

There are two types of suffering: emotional and physical. Emotional sufferings pertain to feelings affecting our state of mind,[5] while physical sufferings pertain to anything affecting our bodies. [6]. Funk and Wagnall's New International Dictionary defines suffering as: "To feel pain or distress, injury. To undergo punishment, especially to be put to death." [7].

The Sacrifice of Suffering

Although suffering is not pleasant or enjoyable to the one who endures it, is a sacrifice to suffer for God. Sacrifice is defined as: "The act of offering the life of a person or animal or some object, in propitiation of or homage to a deity...the act of giving up, destroying, permitting injury to, or forgoing something valued for the sake of something having a more pressing claim. [8]

God's Refining through Suffering

Suffering is one of the ways God refines us, perfecting the fruit of the Spirit in us. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (Galatians 5:22). Jesus

was perfected through His sufferings. Hebrews says: "For it became him, for whom all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

(Hebrew 2:10, KJV).

[5] The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. S.v. "emotional."

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/emotional>

[6] The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. S.v. "physical."

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/physical>

[7] *Funk & Wagnall's New International Dictionary of the English Language Comprehensive Edition*. 1971. Reprint, Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Company, 1995.

[8] Webster's New World Dictionary of American English. 1970. Reprint, New York: Simon & Shuster, Inc., 1988.

Addison Leitch, pastor and theologian once said, “When the will of God cross the will of man, somebody has to die: [9].

Job had a revelation by God about his suffering when he said, “But he knoweth the way that I take: When he hath tried me, I shall come forth like gold.” (Job 23:10, KJV). In ancient times fire was used to refine gold. The gold was placed in a crucible and heated over very hot flames. When heated like this, the impurities rose to the top of the metal and it was skimmed off. This method is still used today. The melting point of gold is 1064.3 degrees Celsius. [10]. Indeed, the refining fires of God are very hot.

Job, the Forerunner

Job was a forerunner. He was a chosen one of God and was a prophetic type of Christ, in that he suffered, died to his self for the sake of many, and was resurrected by God in his restoration. A forerunner is “a person or thing coming in advance to herald the arrival of someone or something”. In order for Job to become this shadow of Christ and spiritual father of suffering to many, he had to walk it out. It was in this place of suffering God refined Job.

Bob Sorge, in his book about Job, wrote, “God promoted him to the place of being a spiritual father to all of the saints of all generations who have walked through the valleys of God’s refining fires”. [12]. Job may not have fully understood the reason he had to suffer, but he trusted God. He was righteous, faithful, obedient and humble. He ultimately fulfilled God’s purposes for his life and others in his suffering. God’s glory was revealed to Job and others through his suffering.

We cannot minister to others effectively from a place we have not been ourselves. Bob Sorge goes on to say in his book. “The greatest voice is not given to the untouched or unscathed but to those who have experienced the pain of those to whom they are sent”. [13]

[9] “Inspirational Quotes”. JesusAlive. <http://www.Jesusalive.cc/quotes.htm>

[10] How to refine gold”. www.goldtraders.co.uk/gold-information

[11] Collins English Dictionary. S’v. “Forerunner”. [Http://thefreedictionary.com/forerunner](http://thefreedictionary.com/forerunner)

[12] Sorge, Bob. Pain, perplexity and promotion: a prophetic interpretation of the Book of Job. Lee’s summit. Mo: Oasis House, 1999

[13] Ibid.

Dying to Self

As we suffer we die to ourselves and live for Christ, making Jesus Lord of all. To the degree we are crucified in Christ, God's glory (His nature and attributes) will be revealed in us and through us. Galatians 2:20 says, "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".

During this refining process, God will expose the dark, hidden things in our hearts (Luke 8:17, KJV) and give us the grace to be transformed into His likeness. The book of Romans says, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit mortify the the deeds of the body, ye shall live". (Romans 8:13, KJV). It also says in Romans, "Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord". (Romans 6:11, KJV). You know you are a chosen one when you say "Yes" to God and "No" to your own wants and desires.

Mother Teresa, the beloved Catholic nun and missionary from Macedonia, willingly took her vows of chastity, obedience and poverty. She taught at St. Mary's, a high school in India and later became their principal. She been in service for the Lord at that time for seventeen years.

One day while riding a train, she heard the Lord say, " I want Indian nuns, Missionaries of Charity, who would be my fire of love amongst the poor, the sick, the dying and the little children. You are I know the mostincapable person-weak and sinful but just because you are that_I want to use you for My glory. Wilt thou refuse?

She didn't refuse him. She said "yes" to God and answered his second call to help the poor, sick and destitute in the slums of Calcutta. She founded the Order of the Missionaries of Charity, devoting her life to them. She sacrificed many comforts and conveniences in her service to the Lord. She died to herself, and God's glory was revealed to her, in her and through her. "Mother Teresa". [14]

[14] *The Biography Channel website*, <http://www.biography.com/people/mother-teresa-9504160>

Suffering like Jesus

Another purpose of God in suffering for His glory is to partake in the sufferings of Christ.

If we are to be like Him, we must also be willing to suffer like Him. The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake."

(Phillipians 1:29, KJV)

Depending on God

In the place of suffering we must be totally dependent on God. If we are not, we will crumble in the crucible. The Apostle Luke said in the book of Acts, "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28, KJV) . God will use circumstances and people in our lives to teach us how to be totally dependent on Him. We learn not to rely on our own strength or the strength of others. His glory will be revealed to us and we will come to know Him in a greater way.

In his suffering, Job had to totally depend on God. Through his experience, he had a greater revelation of God's glory, knowing Him as El Shaddi: "God Almighty." (Gen. 49:24), Jehovah-Jireh: "The Lord Will Provide (Gen. 22:14), and Jehovah-Rapha, "The Lord Who Heals" (Exodus 15:26).

As we abide in Him, His glory is revealed to us and those around us. Others will see the miraculous way God heals us, provides for us, protects us and restores us. Someone once said, "When all you have is God, God is Enough".

God's Glory Revealed through Suffering

To degree we abide in Him, in the midst of our suffering, dying to ourselves, the glory of God (His character and attributes) is revealed in our lives and also to others. We then become the light that shines in the darkness for the entire world to see. (Matthew 5:15, KJV) That is why the centurion was able to say of Jesus, "Surely this man was the Son of God." (Matthew 27:54, KJV) He saw the glory of God revealed in the life of Jesus.

Suffering for the Sake of the Body

Another purpose of God in allowing us to suffer is so His glory may be revealed through us, for the body of Christ. Speaking of himself, The Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 1 :24: "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

Joni Eareckson Tada is a contemporary Christian woman who has suffered greatly for the sake of the body of Christ. She was injured in a diving accident at the age of seventeen, leaving her a quadriplegic. She learned .to paint during her rehabilitation, holding a paintbrush between her teeth. She is now an artist, an author, a motivational speaker, and the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Joni and Friends International Disability Center and has become an international advocate for people with disabilities [15].

Suffering for the Sake of Injustice

God may have us suffer for the sake of injustice. 1 Peter 2:19 says, "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." The late Martin Luther King Jr. suffered greatly for the sake of injustice. He answered God's first call to service when he became an ordained minister. Later, he answered the second call of God and became a great Civil Rights leader and activist in the 1950's and 1960's. He was used mightily by God to bring about much needed change for our nation and bring an end to segregation between blacks and whites. His nonviolent approach to injustice is memorable. His speeches stirred the hearts of many and are still powerful today. He was slandered, beaten, threatened, imprisoned, and finally assassinated by a sniper bullet in Memphis, Tennessee in 1968. [16]

Suffering for the Sake of the Gospel

Finally, God will allow us to suffer for His glory for the sake of the gospel. In Paul's letter to Timothy he wrote, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

[15] "Joni's Bio I Joni and Friends". <http://www.joniandfriends.org/jonis-corner/jonis-bio>

[16] "Martin Luther King Jr" *The Biography Channel website*, <http://www.biography.com/people/martin-luther-king-jr-9365086>

Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory". (2 Timothy 2:10, KJV)

The Apostle Paul suffered greatly for the sake of the gospel. He willingly laid down his life for God's cause. It is not mentioned in the Bible how he died but secular historical evidence indicates he was beheaded by the Roman emperor, Nero, in Rome, possibly in 68 A.D. [17]

[17] www.biblestudy.org/questions/sauldie.html

Conclusion

Today, God's call is going forth throughout the earth and His chosen ones are answering His call. They are the burning ones, whose hearts are on fire for Him. Chosen by God, they suffer for His glory. Answering His call to salvation, sanctification and service, they are the seeds of John 12:24 that have died (to self), bearing much fruit. In their willingness to suffer for Him, God's glory is manifested to them, in them and through them. They are His light that shines in the darkness, revealing God's nature and attributes here on earth for all to see.

My prayer for you reading this is that you will encouraged to be a burning one for Jesus and when God chooses you, you will suffer for His glory.

“ That the God of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.”
(Ephesians 1:17-19, KJV)

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