

# THE PAIN AND THE PRIVILEGE

By

Curtis Dickinson

A reader of the *WITNESS* recently wrote to say that sometimes there was a deep yearning to do the will of God that it became painful. To encourage this believer I wrote, "This is the sign of a true disciple. When one leaves all to follow Christ, it is just for this purpose; to do God's will. Yet, the more one desires to do God's will, the more pain he will experience. Maybe that is what Paul called 'knowing Christ's suffering.' And, maybe that is how we get to know Him best, through this pain of striving to do His will."

Such pain should not surprise us. The Bible is filled with examples of God's faithful people who came to know Him through the afflictions and the pain that they suffered. Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, John the Baptizer and Paul. These were privileged to a close fellowship with God, but also knew the pain of striving for holiness in a world of sin.

It is when we get close to God that we feel the pain of our sin. It is like looking at a light; the closer we get, the more the brightness hurts our eyes. The closer we get to God, the more He reveals our nature, and the more we sense our lack of sufficient Godliness. The pain is one way of knowing we are near the penetrating light.

Yet there is joy, the joy is the presence of the Lord, a presence we know by faith and also be the reality of the pain in getting closer to the Lord. A paradox, I suppose, but so be it. The promise of relief from all pain is not to be fully realized until the day of resurrection when we awake in Christ's pure and true likeness.

This is but not to say that the true Christian walk is a painful experience, but rather that the earnest desire to be always in the Lord's will is bound to produce some pain and suffering as we are refined in the test of trial and fashioned more to conform to the image of God. The more we do the Lord's will the more we are at odds with the world, and the more we are having to put down the carnality of our nature. The warfare is always there. Once we enter into Christ's kingdom and begin putting first the righteousness of God, we immediately become misfits as far as this world is concerned. *Of course it is better to be a misfit in this world than to have no place at all in the eternal world to come, as will be the condition of those who have rejected Christ.* We are not called to fit into society, but to call it to repentance. "The friendship of this world is at enmity with God." Becoming a Christian, according to Paul, is like being crucified. Jesus said we must take up the cross daily. Self denial is demanded all along the line and the closer we get to God and His will, the more clearly we see those things which must be denied; therefore, the pain of denial never ends but increases as we progress along the way. Christ did not find it easier as He approached the cross, but harder; nevertheless, before Him and in the cross lay His glory.

To reject the pain is to reject the growth and the joy produced by walking with Christ. So, when we truly follow Christ, we accept the cross and all it involves. The discipline of Christ is severe, but with it comes His deep love and great power, and in the end immortality and great reward. In the meantime, the Lord gives us seasons of refreshing, and there is an undercurrent of peace and joy that the world cannot touch,

because it comes from harmony with God, a harmony unknown in the world of unbelievers.

The unbeliever considers himself a product of chance, with no particular purpose for being here and no one to account to when he leaves. The Christian believes he is here by Divine fiat. He owes his existence to the Creator-Lord, and is destined to become immortal in His image and must give account to Him. Therefore, as he becomes more aware of the privilege of being created for such a noble, infinite and holy purpose, he also becomes painfully aware of the great responsibility he must bear in fulfilling that purpose. The pain is relieved only by going a step further, to acknowledge that he is not left to attain the purpose alone nor by his own power; but once having committed his life to the Creator, he is assured that it is “God who works in (him) to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

Contrary to what some teach, Christ does not offer a life of what the world calls happiness and success. His kind of happiness the world tries to avoid. “Happy are the meek.” “Happy are you when you are persecuted for my sake.”

The happiness Christ gives goes far deeper than that which the world talks about. It goes far below the surface, down below the surface, down below the pain, a happiness that few ever really seek. Nevertheless, it is the real joy and peace that enables one to live without anxiety and fear, and fills one with a deep sense of thanksgiving and praise.

After all, what God intends to make of us is so magnificent! So glorious! It is worth everything — the pain, the tears, and even our very lives. In fact, that is just what it takes! Then He will make us more than we can even imagine or dream! In fact, He has already started, and the most exciting and thrilling vocation is to participate in the progress of His work. To bear the pain of willing the will of God is a great privilege and blessed are the few who know it.

.....  
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries.  
Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute  
Curtis’ articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article  
for permission to be valid. Vol. XXV, Number 6.  
.....