

# THE BEREAN

"... examining the scriptures daily..." (Acts 17:11).

B. G. Echols, Editor

Telephone 423-6849

## Joy In Affliction

B. G. ECHOLS

How do you react to suffering and sorrow? Do you cry and go all to pieces? Do you grimly bear it? Do you begin to question God with, "Why did this have to happen to me?" What sustains you in times of sorrow? If earthly sorrows, which are common to all men, defeat you, what would your reaction be to suffering strictly for your faith?

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6, 7).

"Wherein" - of what is the apostle speaking? The whole of what he has already mentioned. Every Christian has something wherein he may rejoice regardless of what is going on around him. He has the assurance of salvation (1:18), and the hope of glory (4:13). This is what Jesus commanded (Jn. 16:33; Mt. 5:11, 12). "Be exceeding glad" equals "rejoice greatly." Peter is not commanding, he is stating a fact. The apostles and other early Christians showed the way (Acts 5:40, 41; 16:25, 34).

### MANIFOLD TRIALS

Our afflictions may be sharp, but they are "for a little while" (2 Cor. 4:17). We may grieve for our trials, but remember, the Lord identifies with us (Heb. 4:14-16). Christ has not told us to pretend such does not exist, but to realize the shortness of trials compared to His grace. It is a false Christianity that goes through life pretending that everything is wonderful. It isn't outwardly, and never has or will be; but it is inwardly. The gospel is not a tranquilizer that makes one unconscious of reality. Instead, it gives a deeper insight into reality. "If need be" seems to mean that not all will be persecuted, but if it is you, hold on. "Manifold trials" refers to many kinds. The devil will attack you at your weakest point (Jas. 1:2; 1 Thess. 3:3). God offsets this with His grace (1 Pet. 4:1). It is easy to think we could do better if our trials were something else. Peter says we are to be

glad in whatever trial we face. He refers to manifold trials; war against the soul by lusts (2:11); being evil spoken of (2:12; 4:4); having one's good name reviled (3:16); and being sought by the devil (5:8).

The Christian has a totally different perspective of things because of the promises of God. "We also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh stedfastness; and stedfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope" (Rom. 5:3, 4). "Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 1:6). Paul could rejoice in great trials (2 Cor. 6:10). If we lay the lesson to heart, the time when Christians grow most in the divine life is their time of sorrow. Trouble is sure, short, and to be used profitably.

### THE PROOF OF FAITH

The proof or standing of our faith is more valuable than gold (Jas. 1:3). Remember that this is the purpose of trials and you can endure more easily. They are to build character. Accept and use them. Occupy yourself with getting all the good you can out of them. Why does Peter say "proof of your faith" rather than "proof of your hope" or "your courage" or "your love"? Because faith is the tap root. Strengthen man's trust and all that comes from it will be strengthened. Our relationship to God depends upon our faith. If it be wanting, there is nothing else in us to take its place. If it stands, all else will (Lk. 22:31, 32).

We do not get to the bottom of our sorrows until we look at the moral purpose they serve. Regard them as discipline rather than just pain. Faithful endurance does something for us (Rom. 5:3, 4; 2 Thess. 1:4, 5). The various trials allowed to reach us are designed to refine our characters as precious metals are refined by fire. "Precious" is one of Peter's favorite words (1:19; 2:4, 6, 7; 2 Pet. 1:4). Gold is precious, but perishable. Faith is more valuable and more precious than gold, so it too will survive the test (4:12). Gold does not increase in the fire, but faith does. Gold will ultimately fail, but faith will not. We are not pure gold. God knows that. His purpose is to burn out the dross. When faith has shown itself to be real, solid, and genuine, it has stood up under diverse circumstances. It will be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus is now veiled from man, but He will be revealed at the time of His coming (4:13). This is the final phase of salvation. "When with the Savior we enter the glory land; won't it be wonderful there?"