

How To Overcome The World? - Be Patient In Affliction

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Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be instant in prayer.

Illustration of recent family story.

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Let's first talk about that word 'tribulation'.

Thlipsis, literally means 'to be pressed'. It's a wine word, it's the word used literally to describe a the stomping of grapes at harvest time. Guess what, you're the grape?

Tribulation – it is both a word we fear and somehow are always shocked when it happens to us.

As I look through Romans 12 I see words here like love, joy, hope, patience in tribulation, all of these things we experience or do. I can experience love, joy, hope, and tribulation. But tribulation is something that is done to us or happens to us. Love, Joy, Hope, those are all great qualities, virtues, tribulation just doesn't look like it fits in this verse.

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Why is tribulation in this verse then? Here's the answer: Because without tribulation I do not have genuine love, joy, or hope.

Having said that, tribulation is actually more of the normal experience of life that happens without much effort. Some tribulations we share with unbelievers like sickness and death while some is unique to believers like persecution. Here's the point: Tribulation is very common place. It is out of tribulation we experience all of the love, joy, hope, patience, and prayer.

Tribulation's resides only on earth. Love, Joy, Peace, only reside in heaven and often only happen on Earth as the direct grace and gift of God.

We need to be honest: We do not deserve the peaceful lives we have. They are incredible merciful gifts of God.

Jesus said, "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27). Paul taught all the young churches, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Peter taught the churches, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you" (1 Peter 4:12).

It isn't strange. It's normal. It comes with the fallen, sinful, futile world.

The affliction of our lives extends from cancer to calamity to conflict to death. These are all normal and they are part of what we must live with on our way to heaven. That is why Paul says here in verse 12, "Be patient in tribulation."

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Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matthew 10:34-36).

So the Gospel must continually be fought for and the Gospel will always be under attack.

So tribulations for Jesus are a MUST, we are going to be hard pressed on every side.

How do we do that patiently?

The word patiently here, a better word is persevere: It literally means to 'remain under'. When it is storming you seek shelter. Same idea. But what is that shelter?

Let's look at the context again:

Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be instant in prayer.

The phrases: rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be instant in prayer all modify the clause 'serve the Lord' obviously the object in that clause is 'Lord'.

Paul is sharing with us that as we are hard pressed here in this in life we need to do so remaining under our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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Here's another way Paul says it:

Romans 5:1-6

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

We have to remain under our Lord when our days of Tribulation come our way. My grandmother remained under her Lord and when her final day of tribulation came, as Romans 5 says, she was not put to shame, or as the NIV says, hope does not disappoint.

The question that we are given when we face our final tribulation is do we trust Jesus with our final breathe.

Having said all that now I want to just focus on the 'who' of this verse. I believe it is the most important focus.

We are given a command to persevere during Tribulation. The one whom we are to remain under during that time is our Lord. Let me ask you this: What does the word 'Lord' mean?

Wade Lowrey
www.dailyjesus.info

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(wait for sunday school answer)

It means only one thing: Supremacy, the one who has the only authority to make decisions over another's life.

In the midst of this little three word verse for this week, lies the huge doctrine of the Supremacy of Christ. In fact, a literal way to read this is simply:

In the midst of Tribulations, remain under His Command.

Here's why I bring this up: this is not a personal application verse. This is a communal command. The command is to be patient in affliction as a body. The reason we are to apply this to our Christian community is because individually during a crisis it is so easy to make the crisis larger than our Lord. While we may not intend to do that we often do. When we remain patient in tribulation with our Christian community there is much less of a chance that the crisis will control our thoughts by taking our focus off Jesus. It is through the body of Christ that we are constantly reminded and encouraged how Supreme our Lord Jesus Christ always is.

You see this context is all Tribulation and Supremacy. And if my understanding of Scripture is correct that Tribulations both great and small are a normal part of life I better be able to fellowship as well as minister to individuals during those tough times with more than just quoting Jeremiah 29:11

The reason I make that statement is this: You are living in a post-modern world. Where the Pendulum has swung in our churches to only primarily teaching about the Incarnational Jesus and not the Exaltational Jesus. There's a huge error and danger in that.

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Here's my point: You've probably heard if you have gone to church your entire life 500 sermons on the person of Jesus and maybe 50 sermons at most on the divinity of Jesus. Our Christology is out of whack. As a result when tribulation comes to many of the people in churches, yes they turn to the pastor, their small group for 2-3 days, but after that they try to deal with whatever tragedy with everything but Jesus. They were left with such an incomplete picture and reality of Jesus. We focus on the humanity of Jesus. We read John 11 at a funeral and build the entire message around, Jesus Wept, see Jesus is like us. While that is true and powerful, that is not the focus of the text nor the amazing part of the text! We need a reawakening of the divinity, authority, the majesty, and the glory of Jesus Christ in our hearts, in our minds, in our daily discussions, in our prayers, and in our teachings.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

I want to challenge the Daily Jesus family. When tribulation comes, and it will come. Remain under

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His Command. This does mean that we go to Him as our example but family, it means we also go to Him because of His authority in our lives and EVERYTHING that He Has done for us.

Live each day with your Christology in balance. The people that God has called us to fellowship with and serve do need to know how Jesus lived but they in their time of tribulation and before it and after it need to be constantly reminded, Who He is?

Are you going through a Tribulation of your own right now, church family I say this to you, with in mind both the humanity of Christ and the Divinity of Christ.

John 16:33

In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."