

Joy in suffering

One of the most challenging and life-changing Scriptures for me must be Paul's words of encouragement to the Hebrew Christians who had endured much persecution. Consider the magnitude of the challenge which these few words present:

*Heb 10:34 "For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and **accepted joyfully** the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one."*

I understand the implication of this as my wife and I had to go through the same, having lost our farm and property in Zimbabwe, fleeing to South Africa overnight with a mere suitcase of clothes each. However, this Scripture speaks to me of much more – things which many people grapple with daily, but sadly seldom know how to cope with.

Consider the words "*seizure of your property*". We understand immediately that this is something grossly unfair. Who gives any government agency the right to seize another person's property without compensation? However, if this "*seizure of your property*" is essentially about being unfairly treated, then that can apply to a vast list of things which most people face daily. What about sickness, or a government's manipulative control over what the citizens may or may not do? Mandy and I have not seen our children or grandchildren for more than two years. We love them dearly and miss them terribly. However, the decision not to go to New Zealand to visit them

does not lie in our hands. It lies in the controlling hands of government authorities.

Mandy and I are presently sick with Covid-19. Sickness or whatever situation a person might be confronted with, might be difficult to cope with. Yet amidst this, Paul writes, "*You accepted **joyfully** the seizure ...*"

When you are feeling sick or struggling with a broken marriage or financial difficulties or a yearning for your children, or have been put into prison on false, trumped-up charges as I was, the challenge comes to each of us in the same measure – "*Accept **joyfully.***"

The Apostle Peter adds more to this startling truth:

1Pet 4:12 "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

*4:13 "but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, **keep on rejoicing**, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may **rejoice with exultation.***

*4:14 "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, **you are blessed**, because **the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.**"*

The key of having **joy in suffering** is related to a deep **personal faith in Jesus**, an **intimacy of relationship with the Holy Spirit**, and a **steadfast HOPE in the promises of Scripture**. It then also lies in a basic Christian sacrament – baptism. I am not

talking here of a mere religious ritual but rather of that which baptism essentially represents – a **death to a selfish lifestyle**, and a coming alive to a life where Jesus is absolutely our first love.

There is much more which can be written about this subject. My book, [*Embrace the wilderness*](#), deals with this subject in much greater detail, and can be ordered from my website www.henryjackson.online. However, with this short blog I just want to encourage those who are struggling with the unfairness which life sometimes throws at you.

Most of Paul's letters were written from prison, and those epistles form almost half of the New Testament. A large part of the Psalms is written from a place of conflict with enemies. The central verse in probably the most famous Psalm reads,

Psa 23:4 "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death ..."

and then in the next verse we read the beautiful promise,

"I am drinking out of the saucer because my cup runneth over with joy." (paraphrased)

The book of Job is a difficult book to understand as it is written from a place of deep suffering. Yet Job makes a remarkable statement of faith,

Job 13:15 "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Then later Job says:

Job 19:25 "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth.

19:26 "Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God;"

Jeremiah, the "weeping prophet" wrote the book of Lamentations. It is five chapters long, and probably the saddest book one can read. Yet in the very centre of the middle chapter, we read this remarkable statement of faith,

*Lam 3:21 "This I recall to my mind, therefore I have **hope**.*

3:22 "YHWH's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail.

3:23 "They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.

*3:24 "'YHWH is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I have **hope** in Him.'*

3:25 "YHWH is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him."

I am also writing this blog from a place of sickness, and most of my books and articles have been written after having fled from Zimbabwe, and out of places of utter weakness. I have personally found that my greatest inspiration for writing deep spiritual truths have come from personal times of utter weakness. As weak as my body might be, my own heart is so full of joy and peace in the Holy Spirit that I just want to sing

and shout His glory all the time. I spend much time in front of the piano worshipping Him, for He is worthy to be praised. This **joy** emanates from a deep **intimacy with the Holy Spirit**, and **hope in Him**.

I would like to encourage you to humble yourself before Him. Do not seek your own comfort and gratification, but rather pray as Jesus did, "**Not My will but Thine be done.**"

We are in an end time lifestyle that severely challenges the deepest spiritual motives of our hearts. If ever there was an urgent time for us to humble ourselves and seek Him as our first and only love, then it must surely be now! Jesus warned the disciples at Ephesus:

Rev 2:4 "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love."

Let us cling to Him with everything that we have.

With much love in Jesus and encouragement to you all,

Henry Jackson