

THE CHURCH AFRAID TO PAY THE PRICE

The Revelation 2:8-11

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Introduction:

You know it's going to be a bad day when:

- * You wake up face down on the pavement.*
- * You call suicide prevention and they put you on hold.*
- * You see a 60 Minutes news team waiting in your office.*
- * Your birthday cake collapses from the weight of the candles.*
- * You turn on the news and they're showing emergency routes out of the city.*
- * Your twin sister forgets your birthday.*
- * You wake up to discover that your waterbed broke and then realized you don't have a waterbed.*
- * Your horn goes off accidentally and remains stuck as you follow a group of Hell's Angels on the freeway.*

I am writing in response to your request for additional information. In block number 3 of the accident reporting form, I put, "Poor Planning", as the cause of my accident. You said in your letter that I should explain more fully, and I trust that the following details will be sufficient:

I am a bricklayer by trade. On the day of the accident, I was working alone on the roof of a ten-story building. When I completed my work, I discovered I had about 500 pounds of bricks left over. Rather than carry them down by hand, I decided to lower them to the ground in a barrel by using a pulley which, fortunately, was attached to the side of the building at the tenth floor.

Securing the rope at ground level, I went to the roof, loaded the 500 pounds of bricks, then went back down to the ground and untied the rope, holding it tightly to insure a slow descent of the 500 pounds of bricks. (You will note in block 11 of the accident reporting form that I weigh 135 pounds). Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forget to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rapid rate up the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the fifth floor, I met the barrel coming down. This explains the fractured skull and broken collarbone. I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles deep into the pulley. Fortunately, by this time I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold tightly to the rope in spite of my pain.

At approximately this same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground, and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Devoid of the weight of the bricks, the barrel now weighed approximately 30 pounds.

I refer you again to my weight in block number 11 of the accident reporting form. As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the building. In the vicinity of the fifth floor, I met that barrel coming up again! This accounts for the two fractured ankles and lacerations of my legs and lower body.

The second encounter with the barrel slowed me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell into the pile of bricks, and fortunately, only three vertebrae were cracked.

I am sorry to report, however, that as I lay there on the bricks -- in pain and unable to stand -- watching the empty barrel ten stories above me -- I again lost my presence of mind -- I LET GO OF THE ROPE.

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."
(Matthew 16:21)

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Romans 8:17)

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;" (Philippians 1:29)

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12)

WE MUST BE BOLD IN SUFFERING. How?

I. By Looking at the One Speaking (8)

A. Who Inhabits Eternity

B. Who Experienced Death

C. Who Authored Life

II. By Learning From What He Knows (9,10)

A. He Knows About Us (9a)

Title: The Tribulum

*In the pictures of the ancient Roman method of threshing grain, one man is always seen stirring up the sheaves while another rides over them in a crude cart equipped with rollers instead of wheels. Sharp stones and rough bits of iron were attached to these cylinders to help separate the husks from the grain. **This simple cart was called a tribulum -- from which we get our word "tribulation."***

*When great affliction comes to us, we often think of ourselves as being torn to pieces under the cruel pressures of adverse circumstances. **Yet as no thresher ever yoked up his tribulum for the mere purpose of tearing up his sheaves but to disclose the precious grain,** so our loving Savior never puts us under the pressure of sorrow and disappointment needlessly. "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)*

"Knows about us" --our fellowship in suffering.

*The Sequoia trees of California tower as much as 300 feet above the ground. Strangely, these giants have unusually shallow root systems that reach out in all directions to capture the greatest amount of surface moisture. Seldom will you see a redwood standing alone, because high winds would quickly uproot it. That's why they grow in clusters. **Their intertwining roots provide support for one another against the storms.***

Suffering comes to all of us, and no one can suffer for us. Even so, just like those giant Sequoia trees, we can be supported in those difficult times by the prayers and understanding of loved ones and friends. It's when we are too proud to admit our needs to others that we are in the greatest danger.

B. He Knows About our Enemies (9b)

C. He Knows All our Future (10b)

*In the center of main street in Enterprise, Alabama, stands one of the **strangest monuments** in the world. It's a memorial to an insect! Handsomely carved in stone is the likeness of a **boll weevil**. Many believe that divine providence was involved in the circumstances that led to the erection of this unusual statue.*

*In early plantation days almost everyone in the community **raised cotton**. But as the years rolled on, a serious pestilence infested the area in the form of a small beetle that punctured the boll of the plant. As a result, it became almost impossible to bring a season's growth to maturity.*

***George Washington Carver**, along with several other scientists, became deeply concerned about the situation and began intensive studies to see if any substitute crop could be grown in that part of the country. **Raising peanuts** was the answer, for they could be planted and harvested with very little loss. **In time, cotton gins were forgotten in that region, and it became known as an outstanding peanut center of the world.** Soon the farmers' profits far exceeded what they had earned from their best cotton yield. In the end, they realized that the destructive insect they had feared had actually triggered the research that brought them prosperity.*

*The Lord often allows trials to unsettle our lives for a blessed purpose. **Perhaps we are trying to "grow cotton" when we should be "raising peanuts."** If so, the delays and disappointments we experience are just the gracious "boll weevils" sent to redirect us so that we will plant the crop of **God's choosing!***

Title: The Fate of the Apostles

*St. **Matthew** suffered martyrdom by being **slain with a sword** at a distant city of Ethiopia.*

*St. **Mark** expired at Alexandria, after having been **cruelly dragged** through the streets of that city.*

*St. **Luke** was **hanged** upon an olive tree in the classic land of Greece.*

*St. **John** was put into a **caldron of boiling oil**, but escaped death in a miraculous manner, and was **afterwards banished to Patmos**.*

*St. **Peter** was **crucified** at Rome with his head downward.*

*St. **James the Greater** was **beheaded** at Jerusalem.*

*St. **James the Less** was **thrown** from a lofty pinnacle of the temple, and then **beaten to death** with a fuller's club.*

St. **Philip** was **hanged** up against a pillar at Heiropolis in Phrygia.
St. **Bartholomew** was **flayed alive**.
St. **Andrew** was **bound to a cross, where he preached to his persecutors until he died**.
St. **Thomas** was **run through the body with a lance** at Coromandel in the East Indies.
St. **Jude** was **shot to death with arrows**.
St. **Matthias** was **first stoned, and then beheaded**.
St. **Barnabas** of the Gentiles was **stoned to death** by the Jews at Salonica.
St. **Paul** after various tortures and persecutions, was at length **beheaded at Rome by the Emperor Nero**.

III. By Leaning on His Promises (10c,11b)

A. Our Payoff (10c)

1. Now

A peach tree stands in our back yard. **Unpruned, the tree grew big and leafy. And it was loaded with peaches, although the fruit was disappointingly small and tasteless.**

The year he was out of work, Larry went to work on the tree. When I came home from school one day and **saw how far back he had pruned it**, I stared in shock. "You've killed it," I cried. "Now we won't have any peaches at all."

I was wrong. That spring the pruned branches burst forth with a beautiful blanketing of pink blossoms. Soon little green peaches replaced the blossoms. "Leave them alone," I begged. **Larry ignored me and thinned the fruit.**

By the end of the summer the branches were so heavily laden they had to be propped up. And the peaches -- oh, how large and sweet and juicy they were. **There was no denying it: the tree was far better off for the painful cutting it endured under Larry's pruning shears.**

No one wants to go through troubles and suffering and pain. But looking back, Larry and I can only say, "Thank you, Lord, for pruning us. Thank you for teaching us to trust you. Thank you for drawing us together as a family and welding us in a way that never happened in happier times. Thank you, that after seeing each other at our worst, we still want to be together." "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 15:2)

I rejoice in knowing that...
There is no oil without squeezing the olives,
No wine without pressing the grapes,
No fragrance without crushing the flowers, and
No real joy without sorrow.

2. Future (10c)

B. Our Protection (11b) *If God sends us on stony paths, he provides strong shoes. -- Corrie Ten Boom*

Conclusion: **Adoniram Judson**, the renowned missionary to **Burma**, endured untold hardships trying to reach the lost for Christ. For 7 heartbreaking years he suffered hunger and privation. During this time he was thrown into **Ava Prison**, and for 17 months was subjected to almost

*incredible mistreatment. As a result, for the rest of his life **he carried the ugly marks** made by the chains and iron shackles which had cruelly bound him. Undaunted, upon his release he asked for permission to enter another province where he might resume preaching the Gospel. **The godless ruler indignantly denied his request, saying "My people are not fools enough to listen to anything a missionary might SAY, but I fear they might be impressed by your SCARS and turn to your religion!"***

SECOND OUTLINE (Basic):

SUFFERING FOR JESUS
The Revelation 2:8-11

Intro: Gospel of Prosperity vs. Paul's experience and teachings

We Must Not Be Afraid of Suffering for Christ! Why?

I. The Price Jesus Paid (8)

- A. He Died Unjustly
- B. He Died Sacrificially
- C. He Died Willingly

II. The Plan He Designed (10)

Note: John 15:18-21; 16:33; Acts 14:22; Heb. 12:1ff; I Pt. 4:12ff

III. The Perception He Expresses (9)

He Knows:

- A. The Energy We're Expending
- B. The Trouble We're Experiencing
- C. The Wealth We're Accumulating
- D. The Attacks We're Enduring

IV. The Promise He Makes (10,11)

- A. Physical Death is Temporary
- B. Eternal Death is Powerless