

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



THE LORD'S FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERING

by

DR JOHN CAMERON McEWAN

**(The Mature Believer's Path towards the end
of their life – where we may be called to
share the Lord's Suffering as we approach
Heaven.)**

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OUR LORD'S "FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING" – HIS SUFFERING

As mature believers we may be asked to walk a very hard, thorn surrounded, narrow path, (**Matthew 7:13-14**), but the apostles refer to this part of the pilgrim journey as "sharing in the Lord's suffering". They indicate in the passages we will explore below that the Lord at times allows great grief, pain and anguish to come into his mature saint's lives, in order for them to know his suffering for them at a deeper level.

There is no suffering in heaven, so it is only on our pilgrim journey here in space-time that we can learn more of His work for us in His First Advent. In our suffering we can enter into the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ and understand the depths of his love for us as we glimpse a little of the pain that he endured for us.

We don't reflect enough on our Lord's anguish before the Cross. For example, Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, **John 11:35**, yet he was going to raise him back to earthly life within seconds. Why did he weep? He wept at the human condition, at the cost of sin and the grief of death, both things that entered this earth at the Fall of our parents in the Garden of Eden. He also wept at the "evil heart of unbelief" (**Hebrews 3:12-13**), that would be shown in the coming days as the religious crowd plotted to kill both him and Lazarus.

In our own deep anguish and physical and mental/spiritual suffering we glimpse his great mental anguish as he advanced in service, love and mercy, shown to those who hated him, and who actively conspired against him. His self-sacrificial journey of service and suffering would end at the Cross, yet that was not the end at all of course. He rose, He ascended, and He is seated at the right hand of majesty in heaven hearing our prayers this very day. **Hebrews 4:11-16, 12:6-7, 11-15**.

Our journey may be a little like this as we mature on our own pilgrim road. We may face great physical losses, great physical and mental/spiritual pain and anguish, feel the depths of separation from loved ones in great griefs, but these things are not the end, they are the last tough steps on the mountain path that leads to heaven. Even Abraham, our great mentor and father in faith had nightmares ("horrors of great darkness" in the night) at times, **Genesis 15:1, 12**, and even Daniel was overwhelmed by prophetic details he glimpsed, **Daniel 7:28, 8:18-19, 26-27, 10:14-16, 19**, and we must remember he was seeing our day.

If Daniel fainted to see the evil days to come, and we are living in the time that our Lord called "the beginning of sorrows" (**Matthew 24:4-8**), we must expect to feel a little, or a great deal of what Daniel felt. Given that we are living in days Daniel staggered in spirit to see prophetically, is it any wonder that our knees and legs buckle beneath us at times as we see the enemy's malice towards us and God's people. We have seen these things in our first book on this subject recently – "What's the Enemy Team up to in our Day". Now let us glimpse our Lord's suffering in our own, and that also of the apostles, and draw closer to their hearts in the process.

J R R Tolkien in his classic book, "The Lord of the Rings" spoke of the dangerous "quest" to destroy the evil lord Sauron's (Satan) great "ring of power". It is a quest by a mixed band of

brothers heading towards the very centre of the evil empire trusting in their destiny. They were focused on fulfilling what was needed for the salvation of all their lands. Tolkien, like his friend and fellow “Inkling” C S Lewis, was writing a very Christian Novel, speaking of the earthly journey of us all, where the vast majority die for nothing, lose everything to evil, and achieve little. Few win the “crowns” of glory, but that is to be our goal. So many waste the opportunities the Lord gives.

This sad fact is our daily reality because so many are sleep-walking through their short life, and are not aware of the events swirling around them. They do not have a sense of “call” upon their life to achieve what God wants of them. The Jewish people of Jesus day did not recognize the significance and uniqueness of their days and so the majority were swept away in the Great Revolt of AD 66-70. **Luke 19:41-44**. Just like today. So many are being swept away by the drug world or by depression and anxiety that can be solved, but only in living saved relationship with Christ Jesus as Lord.

Luke 19:41-44. *“41. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42. Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. 43. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”*

We have that urgent “call” to “wake up” from the apostles, and we are without excuse if we waste time and opportunities to achieve what God wants with our brief lives here in space-time before we join the Lord and the saints forever in heaven. This present book follows up the recent publication of our book asking, “What Is the Enemy’s Team Up to Today?” As we saw there, to fail to understand the days you live in, is to fail to achieve what you are called to achieve in those “latter days”. Just as Mordecai said to Esther in a crisis time for Israel, we are also “here for such a time as this”, and we need to hear the call of the apostles and truly stand in the Apostolic faith. **Jude 3**.

We hear Paul’s anguished call to the churches in **Ephesians 5:8-21**, and we are aware this trumpet call to action in the angelic conflict is followed by the very urgent order to “Get Your Spiritual Armour ON right now! **Ephesians 6:10-18**.

Ephesians 5:8-21 *“8. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: 9. (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) 10. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. 11. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. 12. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. 13. But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.*

14. *Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*
15. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,*
16. *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*
17. *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*
18. *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*
19. *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*
20. *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*
21. *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”*

Ephesians 6:10-18 *“10. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

11. *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*
12. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*
13. *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*
14. *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*
15. *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*
16. *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*
17. *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:*
18. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”*

The Vital Doctrine to Grasp

Crowns (Eternal Rewards for finishing Your Assigned Race in This Life)

1. Rewards and Salvation are carefully separated in the Scriptures. Salvation is a free gift from God, received by Grace Through Faith, but Eternal Life Rewards (crowns) are for meritorious service achieved here on our pilgrim journey in the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing glory to God.
2. Salvation - a free gift to the lost (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 6:23, John 4:10) – and it is an everlasting possession (John 3:36, John 5:24, John 6:47).
3. Rewards – are given to the saved who faithfully work for the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:24, 25, Revelation 22:12) - distributed at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11-

15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10), which takes place after the Rapture of the Church (Revelation 19:7,8).

4. Rewards are often pictured in the form of “Crowns”, which were the Roman Empire and Greek Athletic rewards system. Made of leaves of trees, they stood for greatest achievement in what they recognized. They were then made into gold wreaths to be worn at the winner’s hometown, and associated with even greater financial and status rewards. Five “Crowns” (eternal rewards for faithful service in space-time) are mentioned in the New Testament.

a) The incorruptible crown - for faithfulness in exercising self-control on the pilgrim road. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

b) The crown of glory - for faithfulness in/through suffering on the road. (1 Peter 5:4)

c) The crown of life - for faithfulness under trials. (James 1:12, Revelation 2:10)

d) The crown of righteousness - for faithful testimony by life and lips. (2 Timothy 4:8)

e) The crown of rejoicing - for faithful service – fulfilling your assigned part in the Plan of God. (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20, Philippians 4:1)

5. Rewards come after you have entered into the Plan of God through regeneration and are the eternal reflection of your mature service through your pilgrim journey.

6. Rewards are based on the use of divine operating assets including the filling of the Holy Spirit, application of bible doctrines, and “team playing” in the local and wider church.

7. You can lose rewards but never salvation. (1 Corinthians 3:14-15, 2 Timothy 2:12,13) The church at Philadelphia, the last of the genuine evangelical families of believers on the earth, is urged to be careful that no-one robs them of their crowns. Revelation 3:11.

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There were athletic, civil and military crowns in the Greek-Roman world, and in each sphere of service citizens could win crowns. Whether we are serving the Lord in church and ministry administration (civil), in active energetic ministry (athletics), or in direct confrontation with the enemy forces (prayer and witness – military), we are called to faithfulness on “our” own called journey. There are some very civic, athletic and military orders given in the New Testament by the Holy Spirit through the apostles, and at EBCWA Ministries we believe that we all need to hear and obey them.

1. Know your Enemy’s strategy. Hence our recent book in July 2025.
2. Know the signs that what you see happening is “his actions”, recognize his people.
3. Be Alert to daily dangers on your own pilgrim path through space-time.
4. Know your orders and resist the enemy and all his devices.
5. Do what the Lord has called you to do in His power through the Holy Spirit.
6. Endure the pressures and the anguish and learn from them all and keep focus on advancing in your called work.

7. Jesus stands beside you, the Holy Spirit is within you, so far greater is HE with you than he that is in the world. Stand in rejoicing, in worship, in thankfulness and in God's mighty power. **2 Timothy 1:7.**

In recent days I have been challenged strongly by the creeping paganism masquerading as cultural beliefs and practices. At a recent professional scientific seminar, a full hour key-note address wasn't given by a scientist, but was given over to a Māori leader to speak about Māori Cosmology and the "gods" (read demons) behind each sign of the zodiac. The Bible is clear that the Heavens Tell the story of redemption! Yet this woman was preaching straight paganism to scientists and no atheist or Christian stood up and challenged her pagan world view. We have become too polite towards the new paganism, or rather the re-emergence of the old. What is our attitude to be toward this? We can avoid a great deal of this modern evil by not going to gatherings where pagan views are proclaimed, but what does the Bible say about this revival of evil?

James and Peter, in possibly the first letters to the young churches spell this out clearly and it's a great starting place for us to reflect upon the things the Holy Spirit has brought to our minds in these very dark and challenging days. Paul builds on these earlier words of James and Peter in his Prison Epistles but let's hear these first words ordering us to resist the enemy in our prayerfulness and life witness. Note that the core message is drawing closer to the Lord, closer into the heart of Jesus, being sure of Him, His strength for you, and His message to proclaim.

James 4:6-10. *"6. But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*

7. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

9. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

10. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

1 Peter 5:5-9. *"5. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

6. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7. Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

8. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9. Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

The signs of the enemy's actions are easy to spot. Look at the results in that society of the encouragement of any so-called pagan "cultural" practices. If the results are the "Fruit of the Holy Spirit", we can rejoice that the culture and its rituals are godly, but if the community is plagued by the signs of demonic activity, with child abuse, drug taking, alcoholism and violence,

and if these signs are spreading and growing in intensity, then we can be sure the demonic is at work. Satan hates his own and delights in their early, pointless and horrible deaths. What we see flowing from the drug world today is a good snap-shot of satanic “handiwork”. Our increased suffering in recent days may be due to the growing impact of demonic activity, for it will truly “grieve” the mature saint.

Galatians 5:1, 13-16, 19-26. *“1. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

13. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

14. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

15. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

16. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20. Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21. Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23. Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

26. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

What does the Bible teach about what our attitude and behaviour towards the demonic and its celebration as “cultural practices” should be today? Taking a stand will not win us “friends of the world” and will increase our suffering but the Bible is very clear. Read below.

Joshua 23:7-11. *“7. That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:*

8. But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day.

9. For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day.

10. One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

11. Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God.”

Deuteronomy 32:15-19. *“15. But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.*

16. *They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger.*

17. *They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.*

18. *Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.*

19. *And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters.”*

Leviticus 17:7. *“6. And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burn the fat for a sweet savour unto the LORD.*

7. And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations.”

1 Corinthians 10:16-22. *“16. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*

17. For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

18. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

19. What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?

20. But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

21. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

22. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?”

How deceived by the enemy are the majority of people today about these things? In **Matthew 7:13-23** Jesus made it clear that throughout history the vast majority will be deceived and destroyed by the enemy's malice and deceit, but we have the responsibility to warn them. In our earlier book we highlighted the deception at the core of the enemy's strategies. Let's remind ourselves of this key aspect of Satan's Team philosophy, for it is at the heart of so much grief we feel today.

2 Corinthians 2:9-11. *“9. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.*

10. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

11. Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”

2 Corinthians 11:13-15. *“13. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.*

14. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

15. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”

John 8:41-45. “41. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

42. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

43. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

44. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

45. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.”

John 15:1-18. “1. I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2. 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.

3. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

4. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

9. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

11. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

12. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

15. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

17. These things I command you, that ye love one another.

18. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”

Given the words of scripture we have studied briefly so far, what is our conclusion to this point? Given the increasing malice of the enemy's team that we see openly operating in our own day, what can we personally expect? We may face incredible pressures and sufferings as we advance

in these latter days. It was clear from our last study that we are called to be both “Salt” and “Light” in our dark and at times “dodgy” world.

Remember those doctrines now, and then let us reflect together on the nature of the “Fellowship of His Suffering” that we may be called to be part of as we finish our life’s work. With Paul at the end of his life we want to pour out our lives for Jesus’ glory as a drink offering into the earth – every moment focused on the Lord’s tasking for us.

2 Timothy 4:1-7. *“1. I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;
2. Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.
3. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
4. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.
5. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.
6. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.
7. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:”*

Let us do that with passionate faith in sickness or in health, in robustness of strength or debility – for whatever our physical state we need the power of God alone to achieve eternal results. Let us embrace our days in sickness and in health, in strength and in weakness. We can do all things the Lord asks us to do through Christ who strengthens us, and so any suffering that comes is to be embraced, learned from, endured, and worked through. Nothing is to stop our advance on our pilgrim road, nothing is to be allowed to hinder our work on the Lord’s called tasks, nothing is to rob us of our crowns.

Notes

The “Fellowship of His Suffering”

1. Take up the Cross

2. Embrace the fellowship of His Suffering.

Firstly let us see our Lord's own command to "take up your cross". Let us "take up our Cross" and follow Him but given the falsehoods around this and the legacy of the evil "crusades" let us pause and reflect upon what it means. It doesn't mean any theatrical action, but a life commitment to a path; his path for our life. The command is straight forward and repeated so we can be in no doubt – this is the Lord's personal command to each of us as it was to the disciples.

Read each passage again and again - **Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, 10:21, Luke 9:23.**

Note some key points about this command, for I believe that it is this command that is built upon by the apostles below, as the "fellowship of his suffering".

1. It is a direct command and must be obeyed individually of each believer's free will.
2. It is given to the disciples and so is for believers on the pilgrim journey already.
3. It reflects a dynamic and spiritual "mental attitude" on the pilgrim journey.
4. It is "our cross", not any other person's. Each of us will have our own "cross" to carry on our journey. To carry your cross in the Roman Empire meant one thing – you were going to your place of execution. It reflected a sentence of death over you.
5. We are to die to our old life, the world's interests, and the world's opinions of us. We are to be "dead" to all the appeals of Satan's "Broadway" to fame, fortune, but eventually to hell.
6. It meant bearing the shame of condemnation by the world, and therefore receiving the abuse of the world's people. Just as our Lord was despised, we also accept that fate by "taking our cross".
7. Crucifixion was not a thing alone, for before it the condemned person was abused, beaten and whipped. The suffering was prolonged by the malice of the evil men doing the execution, just as the demonic forces will enjoy their opportunities to hurt and abuse us – but it is with the Lord's permission only – and so Romans 8:28 always applies on this suffering path.

So, to "take up our cross" was the first century way of saying, accept the path of the Lord for your life, die to all thought of worldly ambition and fame, be prepared for the unjust, unfair, and awful malice of the evil ones around you, and through the pain keep marching to your place of death. To carry the cross meant to be aware there was only one outcome – you were to die at the end – and your focus was to be to walk the path with courage and die with dignity to the glory of God forever. Eyes on heaven and the Lord's arms open to embrace you forever.

For ultimately to "carry our cross" means we are destined for heaven and eternal rewards to bring glory to our Lord forever. At its core to "carry our cross" was to be heavenly minded every step of the journey. Remember each part of our book, "Let's Talk About Heaven", for suffering is the Lord's reminder that this is our eternal destiny, not the present pain. All pain, anguish and hurt will be washed away by glory. "Carrying our Cross" daily is the mental attitude of the "heavenly minded" believer who is of maximum "earthly good" in the Lord's service.

Secondly, let us now see how the apostles, especially first of all, Peter (who with his wife will be crucified) build upon this early command of the Lord and “unpack it” using more terms to explain the Lord’s meaning behind his command, and what our response needs to be daily.

1 Peter 2:21-25, 4:12-16. *“21. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

22. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

23. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

24. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

25. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

4:12. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

13. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

14. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

16. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

17. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

18. And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

19. Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

Note Peter’s points that run parallel to the ones above relating to “carry our cross”.

1. The Lord suffered for us on the journey, so don’t feel its “wrong” for you to be asked to join him in this.
2. Suffering isn’t “strange”, indeed it is “strange” if the journey is smooth, because that is not the biblical expectation of the pilgrim path.
3. Our Lord set us the example, to suffer without complaint, simply focus all attention to doing what is required on the path – getting it right by following the Holy Spirit.
4. When hurting, not searching for “justice”, but opportunities for service – always asking, “Lord what are you doing here and what do you require of me now?”
5. It’s about putting our body “on the line” as the Lord did for us.
6. It’s about seeking to obey the immediate task as we are clear on the Lord’s command to us, where to be, what to do, and who to associate with...
7. It’s about joy in the midst of the path, proclaiming victory over the demonic forces abusing us, by affirming that the “Joy of the Lord is my strength”.

James 5:7-13. “7. *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.*

8. *Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*

9. *Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.*

10. *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.*

11. *Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

12. *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.*

13. *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.”*

Now we are seeing these passages in the light of the Lord’s command about “taking up our cross”, can you see how James is building upon the things our Lord said.

1. Be patient – it’s God’s Plan for your life, not yours! **Isaiah 55:6-9, Jeremiah 10:23.**
2. Eyes on the Lord alone. His Plan, His opinion, His power alone will do the job!
3. Be a team-player – no sledging/abuse of other team members. The Holy Spirit will produce cooperative work, not competition. Fruit of the Spirit brethren at every step of the pilgrim path.
4. Remember the prophets of the Old Testament and how they often were abused and even murdered by the people they spoke to. Be ready to be treated no better than them, or than your Lord. **John 15:18.**
5. Endure – this order was the military “daily order” for the Roman soldier. Whatever the hardships of the path, endure them and keep marching forward. Its not saying you are enduring through gritted teeth and tears, its moving past the tears and obeying the command before you and doing the work in Holy Spirit power.
6. Be faithful to the task and the Lord who gave it to you. No play acting, no public “oaths” dramatically taken, just “get on with it” and obey! Leave drama and play acting to the enemy forces – hypocrisy is their hallmark symptom; it is not to be ours!
7. Worship your way through the crises on the pilgrim path. Sing songs, psalms and lift up your voice in praise. “Though you slay me Lord, yet will I praise you on your hard mountain pilgrim path for my life!”

1 Corinthians 4:11-16. “11. *Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place;*

12. *And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:*

13. *Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.*

14. *I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.*

15. *For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*

16. *Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.”*

Paul has already proved his credentials in and through suffering as he writes this, and its not just the beating in Philippi, its many, many suffering crises through the chapters of Acts to his arrival in Ephesus and his letter to Corinth, most of which Luke doesn't even mention!

1. Hardships may be very physical – it doesn't mean we are on the wrong path – just take your bearings from the Lord and keep on his path.
2. We may be short of food, fluid, clothes, we may be beaten up – just keep your eyes on Jesus.
3. Be ready to do the tent-making required at times. No sense of entitlement to an easy road.
4. Abuse from evil people is to be seen as “normal” on the road.
5. Follow the apostles example.

Philippians 3:7-12. *“7. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11. If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. 12. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”*

Paul in these next two passages, written probably days or even hours apart, is reminding us that as he dictates the letters, four Roman Soldiers of the Praetorian Guard were there taking notes. The soldiers guarding him under “house arrest” always reported back to HQ. they were guards but also “spies” for the prosecution in the trial Paul would face. Roman virtue demanded a toughness that was always ready to suffer for the cause of the Legion and master any adversity by focused energy applied.

These soldiers were men who stood for Roman values and Paul is keen that they hear clearly the content of these letters and see that the Christian faith stands for the best of Roman values, but there is so much more also...

1. Paul's own values have shifted dramatically from religious Pharisee who valued the legalistic point scoring legalism, to a man who sees that genuine righteousness flows from relationship with Jesus, no other way. That relationship is the battle tested one.
2. All that women and men can do in religion is impress each other with relative righteousness but in Christ we receive the positive righteousness of God.
3. Power flows through our lives due to our connection to the Lord's resurrection power whereby He defeated sin and death.
4. Legalism cannot defeat sin or death, but Christ did, and its through relationship with Him that we experience victory over sin and fear of death.

5. All this power flows through a clean channel, and there is no cleaner channel than that within a person who has suffered and burned away in the process all that doesn't matter eternally.
6. The Lord has truly "taken hold of us", he has "got hold of us" to achieve something here. Not for us to just drift along after salvation. We are here to celebrate His work through our Holy Spirit empowered work for the glory of His name.
7. No Roman soldier joined up for parade duties, but for battles and for renown to be won. The crowns were only won on the fields of conflict where suffering was the norm. The "normal Christian life" is to be the on battlefield of the angelic conflict where we fight to win, we don't do shadow boxing in a gym. **1 Corinthians 9:25-27.**

Colossians 1:24-28. *"24. Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:*

25. Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26. Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27. To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28. Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:"

The Colossians require some specific correction for their "heresy" that combined Jewish mysticism and Kabbalistic nonsense, angel worship and other things. Even though there is a legalistic tinge to the nonsense they have swallowed, Paul's theme remains draw closer to the Lord Jesus Christ and let his power transform you, not any "system".

1. Rejoice in the Lord! Legalism makes you serious about yourself and your rules, but the life of Christ within will make you sing aloud. Joy is the fruit of the Spirit.
2. Celebrate all we are able to achieve in the Lord's power. Celebrate the Holy Spirit's work within you.
3. Fill up what the Lord has left behind on the earth for the churches to do. We are left here to continue and complete his work, and we do so through walking the suffering path and being like Him in all we think, say and do.
4. It is the joy we feel as we walk with Jesus down tough paths is the motive power for achievement in the filling of the Holy Spirit of things we would not have imagined before.
5. Mystery doctrines have been revealed after the Lord's ascension because the angelic conflict is now technically "won". We live in the intensified stage of the conflict because Satan knows he is beaten, and that his time is limited, and he hates the fact that we are superior to him in the Holy Spirit's power. **1 John 4:4.**
6. We now can have, in Christ and through doctrines understood, confidence (hope) in the Lord's victory and our own eternal security.
7. Our objective as pastors is that of the Lord for the church, that we might teach the truths of the Word and present every believer "complete" in all ways in their service so that all we lead win eternal rewards.

Old Testament Examples

The great prophets of the Old Testament all were called to stand against the paganism of their day and proclaim the message of light into the darkness. Let us be encouraged by their mentorship in this. They truly show how to be light in the darkness and salt in a world that has lost its spiritual savour. Once again, we will look at their words in time-line sequence, and simply comment on them in accord with the theme we are exploring in this book, so please refer to the full Old Testament Commentaries (for the full implications of their ministry) to be found on the Website. www.ebcwa.com

It's a hard road for all preachers and prophets of the Word of God. Fakes and false brethren get the "easy road" downhill, but it leads to Hell, exactly as the Lord said in **Matthew 7:13-23**, but we will see this pointed out below in the larger prophetic books. If God's people and the pagans around them are hardened in their sinful rebellion against God's gospel message, then the preachers and prophets need to be tougher than those they speak to. Like the old prophets, and the SAS and other special forces, God's preachers in these last days before the Tribulation Period, need to be prepared in their training by suffering at a high level and prove daily to be obedient to the Lord's call under that burden.

Isaiah 6:5-8 *"5. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.
6. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:
7. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.
8. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."*

God hates hypocrisy and requires its purging away from the lips and life of his servants. To be "holy" means to be truly "set apart" from the evil nonsense of religion and all forms of paganism and materialism. This holy separation is God's requirement. Isaiah is ready to have this "burned" into him. Suffering is often the way the Lord "assists" his servants to make this separation and so be 100% focused on the work we are called to perform.

God's call is always gracious and able to be heard, thought through, and then responded to with understanding of the suffering required. "Who will be sent?", the Lord asks often and most duck for cover rather than lose all their earthly comforts, but Isaiah, like each of us meditating on this subject are ready to count the cost, and so quietly and soberly we are ready to say, "Lord send me".

Just reading this present book is a dangerous statement before the angels – you are saying, "Lord I want to walk fully the mountain path to glory". Be ready to increase your prayerfulness in the days to come for the testing will come as the demonic hatred of you grows, for they hate

dedicated believers determined to walk the pilgrim path. Set your face like Isaiah today and purify your heart and lips and focus on the Lord's will today for you.

Isaiah 9:16-17 *"16. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.*

17. Therefore the LORD shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one is an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

The Lord must judge the evils of false religion masquerading as genuine faith. False teachers and dodgy prophets abound in our day and their result in the churches is devastating to biblical ministry, for the places where the fake "prosperity gospel" message is heard are places focused on "mammon" not godliness and sacrifice.

Notice the close association of Hypocrite and "Evil-doer". For the policy of Satan is "evil" and the greatest evils are associated with "unbelief" – simply ignoring, rejecting or being distracted from the Word of God and Bible Doctrines. There is no mercy shown to those who walk away from the truth, for the truth alone will save them in danger. There is no deliverance for the disobedience, for they have walked too far from the path and there is no way back at times. The Lord ends up having to "take them home early" in judgment.

In scripture this is called "The Sin unto Death", **1 John 5:16-19**. John's very last words were given over to this warning, and the Exodus Generation were the most dramatic biblical example of distraction and rebellion against the truth to the extent that nearly the entire generation died under judgment.

Let us keep our focus and "win our race" by living in Holy Spirit filled power only, lest we become simply, "carcasses fallen by the wayside in the wilderness of this present world. IN the police they have a very poor-taste joke. They ask, "what is the name for the man who thinks he can win in the criminal drug world?" Answer = "the body". That is – he dies!

Hebrews 3:7-17. *"7. Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,*

8. Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

10. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

11. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

13. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

14. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

15. While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

16. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

17. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?”

Isaiah 28:12-15. *“12. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.*

13. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

14. Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.

15. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.”

Isaiah is such a great mentor for Dr Peter Moses and myself in our www.ebcwa.com work in writing material for the suffering churches of the Third World. They are desperate for truth, simply because the “overflowing scourge” of Islamists and other haters of the faith sweep through their communities at times murdering and burning. They are focused on the need for systematic bible doctrine because they have seen that nothing else prepares the Lord’s people for the battles that will come into their lives. **Jude 3, 2 Peter 3:18.**

The only cure to “weariness” and “depression” in this god-rejecting world is the daily refreshment of the Word of God, but not the typical “3-point sermons” that do not truly “build” understanding, but rather the systematic teaching that is precept upon precept and line upon line, so that doctrinal understanding builds through time and the believer genuinely grows. Ignorant and disobedient believers in Nigeria are murdered by the enemy of truth because they walk in places they ought not. Even in the West many young and foolish believers die early and so unnecessarily because they do not heed the Holy Spirit, or even are ignorant totally of the biblical precepts that would have kept them safe.

Isaiah 43:1-5. *“1. But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.*

2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

3.. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

4. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

5. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;"

So far we have seen principles emerge from Isaiah's message but in this passage there are several key points systematically set out. Note these things again by key points.

1. Fear not on God's path for your life. You are his ambassador, 2 Corinthians 5, and so you are His responsibility.
2. God made you in the womb, and He redeemed you at the Cross. You are his alone, not the enemy's possession.
3. You are "called by name" and known individually and the plan for your life is precise and the Lord has the responsibility of supplying your needs to meet the plan, for the plan is HIS not yours. You are "loved" not despised nor rejected.
4. You will have waters of difficulty flow over you at times, but they will flow over and be gone, for you are established on the rock that is Christ Jesus.
5. The fires of affliction and suffering will burn off your earthly "clothes" at times, but the fire will pass, and you will then advance again through the ashes to greater blessing and service.
6. You are precious in God's sight as his children. Have faith in His provision and His protection against any of the so called "great powers" against you.
7. As the Lord has delivered, so he will deliver today.

My great mentor Dr J Vernon McGee tells the story of the old man who was asked for his "favourite verse" by a visiting preacher. He answered, "And it came to pass..." When asked to explain he said, "I give thanks to my God, for my troubles come and they pass and my job is to keep plodding forward...". That is our task also.

Isaiah 51:6-8. "6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

7. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

8. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation."

How often do we heed the Psalmist and "lift up our eyes to the hills or the heavens?" As we look at the hills here in New Zealand we remember the Christchurch earthquakes when the hills leaped up and shook. As we look up to the stars, we remember that the entire space-time universe will be folded up and put away by the Lord when it has finished its part in the eternal plan. All that remains is the eternal provisions of God. Given all will disappear what sort of people ought we to be? Peter asks this same question, possibly reflecting on Isaiah's words. **2 Peter 3:9-18.**

1. Take a good long look at the heavens, for they are temporary.

2. Look at the earth, so worshipped by the 2030 UN agenda people, for it too is temporary and will be imploded with the rest.
3. Your and my salvation, they are eternal, not the world of space-time.
4. God's Plan is bigger than this temporary universe.
5. Don't be afraid of the assaults of men who will perish with this world.
6. Focus on God's Righteousness and fear nothing else other than not getting your life on track for God's eternal purposes for you.
7. Moths and worms eat the temporary, but you are eternal in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 53:10-12. *"10. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.
11. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.
12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."*

Suffering comes into our lives for increased productivity under pressure. The best wine and olive oils are from the toughest soils and the longest droughts. God's path is a tough one, but we cannot say he didn't tell us that plainly. **Matthew 7:13-23.** Do a word study in a concordance of the word "tears" and see how precious our tears are, shed on the tough path of life for our Lord. Do not think for a second that the Lord does not notice your tears. Explore in the concordance and be uplifted.

1. Remember the Lord's suffering, spoken of here prophetically 750 years before it occurs. We share the Lord's suffering at times, and it is as unfair to us as it was to him, but as we embrace it, we will be more productive, for we will be depending on him alone.
2. He will prolong our days, for we will not die one second before we are called home to glory. Psalm 68:20, 116:15.
3. God's good pleasure will be performed in our lives – for that is what we are called to and God's part is to ensure we have all we need to do the work.
4. God sees the travail of our soul, and he stores our tears for they are precious in his sight. Psalm 56:8, Malachi 3:16-17.
5. The Lord has "bourn our iniquities" and we are accepted "in the beloved".
6. He has had 100% victory, and we are to advance daily in that assurance seeking only God's well done at the end of our earthly road.
7. As our Lord poured out his soul unto death, so let us dedicate ourselves to do the same.

Isaiah 55:6-9. *"6. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:
7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."*

8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

This, as you all by this point know, is one of my foundational faith-principles, but it is also my “Daily Orders” for successful mission.

1. Daily let us “seek the Lord” through systematic study of the Word of God.
2. Let us stay close to the Lord on the path, for He alone is our strength and stay on the hard paths we must walk.
3. Minute by minute we need to call upon Him in prayer. It is to be offered up with the “frequency of a hacking cough” – Paul’s phrase in Colossians 4:2-3, 1 Thessalonians 5:17.
4. Forsake anything that slows your focused obedience down.
5. God will have mercy, he will abundantly pardon, all we need do is ask. We cannot be depended on at times, but God can always be depended upon.
6. God’s Plan is Eternal, we are at this point temporal, trapped at this point in space-time. our minds are simply not big enough to grasp the full truth of the plan, but we will in heaven see it all and praise Him forever for the glory of it.
7. Let us begin that psalm of praise now, and thank the Lord, in Abrahamic faith, expressing our eternal confidence as we face our temporal/temporary suffering.

Isaiah 66:22-24. *“22. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.*

23. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

24. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”

Eternity is to be in our thoughts daily. We are to be “heavenly minded” for only then are we of “earthly use”. Do not swallow Satan’s lie, for he hates all thoughts of heaven, and that is why this book is the third in our present series.

1. Let’s Talk About Heaven.
2. What is the Enemy’s Team up to in our days?
3. Sharing in Our Lord’s Suffering.

Dealing with our earthly suffering begins by getting our eternal life perspective right – resting our mind and heart in the eternal realities of heaven, and in God’s provisions for us now, which flow from the very throne of heaven. Let us daily “boldly approach the throne of grace”, Hebrews 4:12, remembering God’s Plan is so much bigger than our limited minds.

All choices here and now have eternal consequences. We are destined to live forever with the Lord in the eternal world that is yet to be seen by human eyes. Revelation 21-22. John glimpses the future and is overwhelmed but excited, and so should we. It is no accident that Isaiah ends with thoughts and reflections of heavenly realities, for these ground us in space-time and help us make the right decisions.

Notes

The Prophet Jeremiah (The Weeping Prophet).

I love this man, and he rightly is called the “weeping prophet” for he wept over his people’s sin and determined rebellion, exactly as our Lord would 600 years later in the same place. Jeremiah wept as he saw the slide into the Babylonian Captivity and the Lord wept over Jerusalem as the nation slid into the Roman dispersion that is just reversing in our own day. Only in the last few years have the numbers of Jews in Isaiah been more than in the diaspora. He wept as we saw the inevitable destruction of the nation and the destruction of the temple and city. They would come back within 70 years and that would be in large part due to Jeremiah’s written work.

Isaiah faced the Assyrian invasion in which probably 2/3rds of Israel perished, but finally the people hiding within the city of Jerusalem were saved, but poor Jeremiah 200 years later faced a different scenario. The Babylonians would be successful, take the city and burn it. Jeremiah faced the total apostasy of the people, and there was no hope of revival before they were all swept away. **2 Chronicles 36:14-16**. Jeremiah would live facing opposition and indifference to the end of his life and would have only one convert, his servant Baruch.

Jeremiah would however remain faithful to the Lord’s message under the incredible suffering he was called to endure. He would doggedly and faithfully preach to the end, to people who didn’t care, but he faithfully wrote out his message, and as he died he passed the two books he had written to his faithful servant Baruch, who through great danger and trials, carried them to Babylon, where Daniel received them. Daniel understood, believed and applied the book’s messages and passed them on to the young priest who had just buried his wife in the exile camp, Ezekiel.

These two men, one in the palace and one by the rivers of Babylon in the slave camp, would take Jeremiah's message, be taught by the Holy Spirit, and build upon it, and the revival would break out in Babylon amongst the exiles as a result. Jeremiah never lived to see the revival, but by faith he knew it would come and expressed this in Lamentations, as we will see below.

Like Jeremiah we also have two areas of ministry today. We preach to the Lord's people now calling them to take the Word of God seriously, and some do, especially in the Third World, but most in the wealthy Western World ignore God's demands, for they are too busy saving for retirements that most won't have. We are to ignore the blank faces of the disinterested (Ezekiel will be directly spoken to by the Lord about this – below) and preach the truth and record it for those in the Tribulation Period soon to break upon this world, for many then will seek the truth, for they will finally see their earthly and eternal lives depend upon it.

Jeremiah 1:7-9. *“7. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.*

8. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

9. Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.”

Like Isaiah Jeremiah is told very directly that his mouth is to speak God's perspective only. He is the Lord's herald and none other. His own opinion is irrelevant; the Word of God alone is to be his theme and life unto his death. He is to obey the Lord alone and not fear the negative looks of the people who will be at least consistent – they will despise or hate him to the end of his life. They call him a “prophet” but ignore his message.

Jeremiah mentor's courage like no other, and he must plod, I believe, the hardest road in scripture, with only Moses coming close with thirteen rebellions against his leadership. Jeremiah simply had constant negativity, whereas Moses was able to lead daily bible study and finally the people “got it”. The people only repent, if at all, as they are slaughtered by Babylonian swords or Scythian arrows.

Jeremiah 8:11-15. *“11. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.*

12. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

13. I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.

14. Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.

15. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!”

The hardest thing for the genuine preacher is to see people following after nonsense being taught by people who twist the scriptures, yet they are lauded and praised as celebrities. Jeremiah had this all the time, for the false prophets were numerous and fatal to all who heard them, and sadly that was the vast majority. The people not interested in the prophets were simply either pagan already or so devoted to pleasure they had no time for God or any religion. An entire generation would perish in ignorance and rejection of truth.

The ultimate in dangerous false teacher/prophet is the person who tranquilizes their hearers with falsehood that eventually kills them by their inaction. When people need to respond to a warning message and that message is hidden or challenged so that no warning is believed, then the people perish. It is fatal, if a ship is sinking, for people to falsely believe they are safe aboard rather than getting off the ship!

To preach “peace” when there is no peace is to be a lying fraud, and finally it is to be culpable for the deaths that result, and personally responsible for the suffering of those who didn’t prepare for the war that was upon them. God was judging and the people either responded by repentance or perished in that judgment. The false preachers and prophets said all was fine. In Australasia we have a saying that reflects this falsehood, “She’ll be right mate!” If repentance is required immediately – it won’t be all right!

There is a time to move quickly, even feel panic and run for your life, and if you sit still you die! Jeremiah saw his entire generation of friends and family perish in their foolishness – he wept for them. They despised him, but he loved them to the end, just as God did and the Lord Jesus would 600 years later – but it was too late for them, and they would not repent! **Matthew 23:37-39.**

Jeremiah 15:15-18, 20-21. *“15. O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.*

16. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

17. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation.

18. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?

19. Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.

20. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

21. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.”

This is a powerful passage for any psychologist or counselor to read, for with David’s description of his mental state after the Bathsheba years, it is an incredible description of

depression, grief, and Post-Traumatic Stress. This man is really suffering within, and it is from multiple aspects of the crisis unfolding around him.

1. The prophet has suffered abuse and rebuke for many years and is worn down in his spirit by the constant negativity of people he is trying to deliver by truth.
2. As he takes in the Word of God, he finds deep inner joy and rejoicing, as did Isaiah. The garments of praise assist in the putting off of his daily heaviness.
3. He experiences such deep loneliness, for the majority hate God and the Word.
4. His deep inner pain is incurable and constant because of the people's rebellion, and the wound in his soul is always open and weeping.
5. The wounds aches but separate the pure from the vile within him, then he will recover his ministry as a fortress of truth against the evils of the land.
6. It's in returning to close fellowship with the Lord that will stabilize him under pressure.
7. God's promise – I will deliver you from evil, I will save you from the terrible who seek your life. Jeremiah would be kept to the end and serve to the end, his last prophetic words will be given in Egypt to the exiles there. Baruch will take them all to Babylon.

Jeremiah 20:7-9. *“7. O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.
8. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily.
9. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.”*

Although he knew his call was a tough one, like all who walk hard paths Jeremiah believed there would be more light and hope than there proved to be. He is not accusing God of being a “deceiver”, but he reminds us that we can feel the Lord has “set us up”, or “hung us out to dry” at times as the pressures wash over our heads. Few experience these feelings, for few walk the pilgrim path to this point, but Jeremiah has to and so do some of us.

Have you felt the depths of Jeremiah's cry here? IN great extremes we may seek to find another path than the bible teaching path, but the word within burns like fire, and we cannot stop our ministry journey forward for we are more miserable if we do not preach the truth. The fires of affliction and persecution never put out the fire of love for the Word of Truth.

Jeremiah 23:21-32. *“21. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.
22. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.
23. Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?
24. Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.
25. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.”*

26. *How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart;*
 27. *Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.*
 28. *The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.*
 29. *Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?*
 30. *Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.*
 31. *Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.*
 32. *Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD."*

Obey the Lord, stand and preach, and leave the fakes to their fate. It is distressing to the genuine servant of the Lord to be surrounded by false-brethren, those who have no divine call on their lives and yet "run" to preach their falsehoods.

1. The false may be known by their disobedient lives – their "fruit" is evil, their words are deceptive.
2. Nothing they do is hidden from God. Their false theology refers to God as so "Other" that God is unknowable on the earth and cannot be reached – its mysticism and waffle the false ones preach. Yet the truth is that God sees, hears and acts, and unless we are in a living relationship with Him we are lost indeed.
3. God hears the nonsense of the prophetic "visions and dreams" – and see they are all nonsense and fakery.
4. God sees the satanic objectives of these men and notes their pagan goals, and sadly they meet their KPIs ("key performance indicators") and the majority follow them to their own spiritual and physical destruction. The goal of a philosophy is the key to understanding the true nature of it. "By their fruit they are known".
5. Let the false prophets announce their dreams and let the wheat of truth be seen in contrast to the chaff of falsehood, for the fire is coming and the fire of judgment will prove it all one way or the other.
6. God's Word is like the hammer and fire of the blacksmith beating out the slag and recovering any true metal there from the furnace of greatest affliction.
7. God's Word is clear – "I am against the false prophet" – they shall not profit my people – I did not send them. Falsehood is seen, sadly too late for the deceived, to demolish rather than build up. God builds up, Satan pulls down – by their fruit....

Jeremiah 45:1-5. *"1. The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,*
2. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch:

3. *Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.*
4. *Thus shalt thou say unto him, The LORD saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land.*
5. *And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest."*

Baruch is a great and humble servant, but like all servants of the Lord he faces the challenges of those who stand for acceptable and popular religion. Will he take an apparently easier road or maintain his walk on God's pilgrim mountain path.

Will he seek the applause and respect of the pagans and the fake prophets or maintain his walk with Jeremiah where God wants them both? Respectable temple-based religion and all its dress up beauty and fame was appealing. Everything looked as if it would last forever and the prophet and the priest would be able to serve together in Solomon's Temple and that all would last. Surely the judgment wouldn't sweep it all away?

Our Lord would warn of this same false viewpoint, **Luke 19:44, 21:6**, as common today as it was then! We look at great buildings and great mountains and we think "with our eyes", this will last forever! It won't last and even a serious earthquake proves that, but we have God's Word on it – all will be imploded one day when space-time ends and is replaced by eternity. **2 Peter 3:9-18**.

Everything looked solid, and the temple courts were full of people honouring the corrupt priesthood, and yet it was all hypocrisy and God's Word through Habakkuk and Jeremiah was clear – all was to be swept away – it just didn't look that way on the surface. Jeremiah challenges his servant Baruch to see with the eyes of faith, not the marketing message of the corrupt leadership. All he had to remember was their attitude to the Word of God and he would know – it was all doomed. It's not "great things" announced on "Facebook" that rightly assigns any ministry to fame and success, but faithfulness to the call of God, and the great work of the Lord is nearly always done "under the radar".

Do we analyze individual churches and para-church movements this way today? This chapter is a challenge to us today. As we look at the multi-million dollar supa-church structures and hear the great music and see the "joy" on the faces, the laughter of the children in the children's program and the great food in the Café we can be as fooled as Baruch initially was. Do they love and preach the Word in a systematic and doctrinal manner? Anything that falls short of this standard is fake and dangerous. God's Work on our pilgrim path is nearly always work that the websites and newspapers of fallen and rebellious men do not even notice, but God does.

As we leave Jeremiah, we move on to read selected passages on suffering in the prophets he passed his work onto, Daniel and Ezekiel. These two will be so influenced by Jeremiah's words, the remnant of the nation of Israel will be changed by their cooperative work. We remember the legacy of our own work on our pilgrim path and focus on where the Lord will take us not just in space-time, but where he will work through our written and spoken words after we have gone.

It's rarely with great meetings of thousands of cheering followers that the greatest work is done, it's nearly always with one or two who take it seriously and apply it for the next generation.

Jeremiah's Lamentation – in Suffering what Themes Matter”

These words form one of the best introductions to formal study of God's Word.

Lamentations 3:22-32 – (Then we will read together **Romans 8:26-28**, **2 Timothy 2:15**, **3:16-17**).

“Lamentations 3:22. *It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

23. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

24. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

25. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

26. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

27. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke of his youth.

28. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.

29. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.

30. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach.

31. For the LORD will not cast off for ever:

32. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.”

Now simply read on through the New Testament readings below and see when the Holy Spirit weaves these verses together, just how powerful they are.

Romans 8:26-28, *“26. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

27. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

2 Timothy 2:15-16, 3:16-17 *“2:15. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

16. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

AMEN indeed. What an affirmation for each of us as we advance though our own suffering on our pilgrim path. Read these passages again – they sum up our pilgrim path – for we are here to serve and proclaim truth.

The Prophet (and Prime Minister) Daniel

Many consider Daniel has the “better role” than Jeremiah and Ezekiel, both of whom have poverty, but the palace is a very hard and dangerous place, and from here Daniel protects his enslaved people even though most will see him as a traitor and turncoat. He must assist those who despise him, and none can help him as he faces the palace plots – he must rest upon the protection of the Lord alone. As he matures he has a lonely role.

His obedience to the called path is seen in the extent of the revelation given to him. Only John sees more than this man, and all John sees in Revelation builds upon Daniel’s earlier visions and those given to Ezekiel. To see such things is to pay a price however, and Daniel is debilitated by what he sees. Prophetic truth, as revealed to Daniel, covered the events of history from the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC through to the final fall of the city to the forces of the Anti-Christ at the end of the Great Tribulation, and he saw every assault upon God’s people in between.

It is a glimpse to the evils of the satanic forces that few have had and so please, sit quietly with Daniel and read carefully his response to what he sees below.

Daniel 7:28, 8:18-19, 26-27, 10:14-19.

“7:28. Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

8:18ff “18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright.

19. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.

20. The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.

21. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

22. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

23. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.

24. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.

25. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.

26. And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.

27. And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

10:14ff. *“14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.*

15. And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb.

16. And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength.

17. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.

18. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me,

19. And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.”

Daniel is directly encouraged by the angels of God, and their appearances to men and women in history are few, but they are needed when they speak.

Note the angel’s words to Daniel.

1. Peace – God has history in his hands. Rest in the eternal plan of God.
2. Strength – the Lord will provide the power you need to do what you need to do.
3. Let God speak to your heart and obey your call.

We cannot solve the problems that prophetic truth reveals.

We do not have to – for that is God’s Plan unfolding that will weave all the details together.

God is the weaver and the author of history – He alone is the “Alpha and Omega”.

We are called to do the Lord’s assigned task that He calls us to do, not the tasks of others.

Notes

The Prophet Ezekiel

Speaking to the exiles and preaching the revival, and then training the next generation to return. Like Jeremiah his greatest work was done after his death through his written material and life example. He mentored Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai and Zechariah and ensured they had copies of the Scriptures to take back when they went and had received instruction in them beforehand.

Neither Daniel nor Ezekiel joined the return group under Joshua and Zerubbabel, as Ezekiel died well before it, and Daniel's call was to remain behind and play his role to the end with Cyrus and his replacements, even to his death at the hands of some of those men.

Ezekiel has always been close to my heart because the Lord led me to the passage below as part of my own call to ministry on 19 January 1976. By this and other passages the Lord made it clear to me that I would not have any more "success" in the sight of men than Ezekiel did, and my call was to witness truth to the few, often having positive responses in far away nations, who would take up the torch and hold it high, but little support locally.

From the start of my ministry, I had to get used to speaking to few and see fewer respond as the Lord required of them yet see massive blessing in Africa and Asia and the Middle East. Only in heaven will I see what has been done through the books written and that is fine with me. As we read Ezekiel's words, we reflect that we are in very good company.

Ezekiel 3:1-11. *"1. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.
2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.
3. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.
4. And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.
5. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel;
6. Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee.
7. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted.
8. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.
9. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.
10. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears.
11. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."*

The preacher in dark days is to stand upon the blood-soaked ground of God's sacrifice for sin and they are to rest and then advance in God's provided power only. The reason for dark days is the negativity of the majority to the path of God for humankind. The preacher must know the Word, believe the Word and then faithfully share the Word. The eternal destiny of every hearer depends upon their response to the truth, and the Lord doesn't hold us accountable for the response, as we saw with Jeremiah, but He will always hold us responsible for telling the truth with passionate care for the lost.

Whether the audience/congregation hear or not they are to be given the truth. All God gives us we are to receive into our heart, think through and then proclaim. We are not "editors" of God's Word, we are preachers of it! God will provide the strength to resist negativity and stand for truth. Each will die in their own sinful rejection of the truth, but any pastor-teacher who doesn't proclaim the truth is held responsible for the perishing of the lost, if they did not have the message properly explained to them. Read the next two sections carefully.

Ezekiel 3:20-21. *"20. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 21. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul."*

Ezekiel 18:19-20. *"19. Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. 20. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."*

The bible is very clear on the matter of personal responsibility and accountability – it is full and final. The burden we feel at times, and the suffering that results for the preacher/prophet is seeing the rejection of truth and knowing where it will lead for these people – they will die in their negativity and remain in that terrible state forever.

Hell is the waiting place for the final "Lake of Fire" judgment. Revelation 20:5-11. It reminds us that the consequences for getting this message wrong are eternal indeed. The rich religious man Jesus spoke on in **Luke 16:19-31** was shocked to find himself in hell but raised no complaint for he now knew he had ignored truth to the end and his decision was eternally fatal and righteous and just!

Ezekiel 24:15-18, 24. *"15. Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 16. Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down."*

17. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men.

18. So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.

19. And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so?

20. Then I answered them, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

21. Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword.

22. And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men.

23. And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another.

24. Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do: and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD."

It was a hard path indeed for Ezekiel to walk. Even when his wife died, he was not to mourn, for he was to stand for the people, and their rebellion back in the land would lead to over a million people possibly dying unmourned in the fields and on the streets of the towns of the rebellious land. The Prophet was to be a "sign" of what was to come, and the people were to be shocked to see where their rebellion would lead.

Ezekiel was to be prepared to do anything, even things hard to accept, so that the people might be convicted and challenged. He was to be ready "by all means" to see if some could be saved! **1 Corinthians 9:22.**

Ezekiel 33:1-6, 11 (Refer then to 2 Peter 3:9)

"1. Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2. Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:

3. If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;

4. Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

5. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

6. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

7. *So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.*
8. *When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.*
9. *Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.*
10. *Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?*
11. *Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"*

We are indeed to be the "watchmen" of our nation. It hurts to care for those who may hate you, but with Ezekiel we are called to walk the pilgrim path of caring love, and that means have a readiness to be hurt and depressed at times as we reflect upon the poor choices of the lost. God has no pleasure in the death and damnation of the lost, and anyone who ever delights in mentioning an evil person is "rotting in hell", that person is not a Holy Spirit filled believer and may not be one at all. None who love Christ and know the nature of Hell and the Lake of Fire will be without a shudder and real tears of sadness for the lost who have chosen their life path to that final destination.

- Ezekiel 48:30-35.** *"30. And these are the goings out of the city on the north side, four thousand and five hundred measures.*
- 31. And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi.*
- 32. And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan.*
- 33. And at the south side four thousand and five hundred measures: and three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun.*
- 34. At the west side four thousand and five hundred, with their three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali.*
- 35. It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there."*

Quite rightly Ezekiel ends by speaking of the Millennial and Eternal Jerusalem and John will pick this up in Revelation 21-22 and go even further. The remedy to our suffering in time is finally only found in eternity when we see the full plan and how God wove our parts together.

Until then we cast our cares upon Him and rest in His arms. Let us reflect upon some early words and some "last words" to challenge us on our subject as we finish this brief reflection.

1 Peter 5:6-11.

6. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7. Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

8. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9. Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

10. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

11. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Hebrews 4:11-16. *"11. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*

12. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

13. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

14. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

15. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Hebrew 12:6-7, 11-15. *"6. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

7. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

11. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

14. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

15. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;"

Looking diligently, being alert, focusing on the goal of heaven through the pressures of time. Amen indeed.

It is a tear-stained path I am walking presently at times, but it is blood-soaked ground also, and our Lord gave far more for me than I am asked to give up for Him. Our Lord suffered for me and now He asks me to share a little of this burden on the hard road I presently walk. I can walk through these dark days in Holy Spirit power and write these words and so draw encouragement from the author of Hebrews and rejoice in my place in Christ Jesus my Lord. I can boldly approach the Throne of Grace any second and I do.

To His Eternal Glory – Amen

Dr John C McEwan
Dean EBCWA

www.ebcwa.com

Auckland, New Zealand

“The ends of the earth”.

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