

“CHARITY BEARETH ALL THINGS.” 1 CORINTHIANS 13:7

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There I was sitting in my seat last Sunday and suddenly, out of nowhere, Fred Jr. says, “You know that they want to kill us, don’t you?” I said, what?!? Who is this, “they” and why would they want to kill us? And, how does a sermon on the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, suddenly warrant that kind of statement? Our Lord Jesus Christ was not some peacenik hippy. I get that. Anyone that reads what he wrote knows he was the original hell, fire and brimstone preacher without peer. But this statement sounds outrageous. It’s extreme. It’s radical. Has Fred Jr. been reading Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs,” again? Did he just think that up on his own or is there Bible authority for such an outrageous statement? No, he’s right, it’s the God’s truth what he said.

Now, Fred Jr. and I had not talked about my sermon today which I mostly wrote before last week when he was speaking, but with that extreme statement he created the introduction to my sermon today. And, by the way, Fred Jr. was speaking to us out of Matthew 23, and really what he said was not out of the blue or extreme, but in fact, directly in context with what our Lord Jesus Christ said there and consistent with the whole, to wit: “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.” (Matthew 23:33-35).

“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. ... Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” (John 16:1-2, 7).

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” (Matthew 10:16). “He compares them to “sheep,” because they were meek and humble in their spirits, harmless, and inoffensive, in their lives and conversations; were weak, and unable to protect themselves, and were sent out by him unarmed and defenceless; and their oppressors and persecutors to “wolves,” because fierce and furious, voracious and ravenous, cruel and hurtful, as these creatures are, especially to sheep.” – (John Gill).

“As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” (Romans 8:36.) “The meaning is, that for the sake of God, and his pure worship, Old Testament saints were frequently put to death, or exposed to the persecutions of men, which often issued in death; as New Testament saints have been,

for the sake of Christ and his Gospel, ... they were reckoned as fit for nothing else, and were continually exposed unto it; were used as sheep are, as if they were made for no other use and service, but to be slaughtered; hence they are called, "the flock of slaughter," #Zec 11:7; and as this expresses the brutality of their persecutors, so their harmlessness, meekness, humility, and patience in sufferings, being under them like lambs or sheep. This testimony is produced, to show that suffering death has been the common lot of the saints in all ages: and is designed to animate the people of God under the Gospel dispensation, to suffer with cheerfulness; the allusion may be to the lambs and sheep daily slain for sacrifice; either to the lambs of the sacrifice slain morning and evening; or to others that were slain in any part of the day from morning to night, for other sacrifices, in the court of the tabernacle and temple." – (John Gill).

Now we count them happy in Revelation 12, where it is said at verse 11: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

And what is this that we read in Revelation 6:9-11: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1).

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." (1 Peter 4:1-2).

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

"For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know." (1 Thessalonians 3:4).

This is no strange doctrine which Fred Jr. spoke of briefly in his sermon last week. Indeed it is a dominate theme throughout the Bible, beginning in Genesis Chapter 4 and continuing through the Revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ "which must shortly come to pass." (Revelation 1:1).

Now the topic for today is “Charity beareth all things.” 1 Corinthians 13:7. And, remember the context of that verse: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). Then, Paul spends the next four verses giving important characteristics of this “charity,” not the least of which is that “Charity beareth all things.” (1 Corinthians 13:7).

Charity, or the spirit of Christian love, tends to prepare men, and make them willing, to undergo all sufferings for Christ's sake, and in the way of duty. I believe this to be the meaning of the expression, "beareth all things" in 1 Corinthians 13:7. Paul frequently speaks of cheerfully suffering in the cause of Christ being a principal result or fruit of Christian love. He does in 2 Corinthians. See Chapters 4-6, and specifically see verse 5:14, where after speaking of what he had undergone in the cause of Christ, on account of which others were ready to say he was beside himself, he gives as the reason of it, that the love of Christ constrained him. “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” And so, again, in Roman 5:3-5, he gives it as a reason why he was willing to glory in tribulations, that the love of God was shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. And still again, he declares, that neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, should be able to separate him from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:35).

The doctrine which I will speak of today is, THAT CHARITY, OR A TRULY CHRISTIAN SPIRIT, WILL MAKE US WILLING, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, TO UNDERGO ALL SUFFERINGS TO WHICH WE MAY BE EXPOSED IN THE WAY OF DUTY.

(That Bible word, doctrine, is important and the word is used frequently, so don't get nervous when I use it. See, for example, 2 Timothy 3:16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 4:2: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” 1 Timothy 4:16: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” The word doctrine simply means: “teaching, instruction; that which is taught; precepts.”)

This doctrine I advocate today implies that those that have the true spirit of charity or Christian love, are willing not only to do, but also to suffer, for Christ. Hypocrites may, and oftentimes do, make a great show of religion in profession, and in words that cost nothing, and in actions that involve no great difficulty or suffering. But they have not a

suffering spirit, or a spirit that inclines them willingly to suffer for Christ's sake. When they claimed religion, it was not with any view to suffering, or with any design or expectation of being injured by it in their temporal interests. They made this profession, so far as they did, only to serve themselves. All that they do in religious things is from a selfish spirit, and commonly very much for their interest; and therefore they are as far as the east is from west from the spirit that is willing to meet suffering either in their persons or their interests. But those that are truly Christians have a spirit to suffer for Christ; and they are willing to follow him on that condition which he himself has given: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27).

And not only are they willing to suffer for Christ, but, that they have the spirit to undergo all the sufferings to which their duty to Christ may expose them. "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. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4:15-16).

They are willing to undergo all sufferings, of all kinds, that are in the way of duty. They have the spirit of willingness to suffer in their good name; for Christ's sake to suffer reproach and contempt; and to prefer the honor of Christ before their own. With the apostle they can say, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake" (2 Corinthians 12:10). They have a spirit to suffer the hatred and ill-will of men, as was foretold by Christ when he said, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Matthew 10:22). They have a spirit to suffer losses in their outward possessions; as says the apostle, "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" (Philippians 3:8). They have the Spirit to suffer in their ease and comfort, and to endure hardships and fatigues: like Paul, to approve themselves faithful, "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings" (2 Corinthians 6:4, 5). They have the spirit to suffer pain of body, like those who were tortured, not accepting deliverance; and those who had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, and of bonds and imprisonment (Hebrews 11:35, 36). They have a spirit to suffer even death itself. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39). These, and all other conceivable sufferings in kind, they are willing to undergo for Christ's sake, and in the way of duty. And, if you want to get a strong flavor of the kind of conceivable sufferings Christians have borne or suffered in history, Foxe's "Book of Martyrs" will supply that to you.

They are willing to undergo all sufferings, of all degrees, that are in the way of duty. They are like pure gold, that will bear the trial of the hottest furnace. (1 Peter 1:7). They have the heart to forsake all, and follow Christ, and comparatively to "hate" even "father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and their own life also," for Christ's sake (Luke 14:26). They have the spirit to suffer the greatest degrees of reproach and contempt; and to have trial not only of mockings, but of cruel

mockings; and to bear not only loss, but the loss of all things. They have the spirit to suffer death; and not only so, but the most cruel and tormenting forms of death, such as "to be stoned, to be sawn asunder, and to be slain with the sword, and to wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented" (Hebrews 11:37). The fiercest and most cruel sufferings in degree, they are willing to undergo for Christ.

It is necessary to our being Christians, or followers of Christ, that we should give ourselves to him unreservedly, to be his wholly, and his only, and his forever. And therefore in Scriptures this process is compared to the act of a bride in giving herself in marriage to her husband; as when God says to his people, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies" (Hosea 2:19). But in marriage the wife gives herself to be her husband's and his only. True believers are not their own, for they are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20), and they consent to the full right that Christ has in them, and recognize it by their own act, giving themselves to him as a voluntary and living sacrifice (Romans 12:1), wholly devoted to him. But they that have not a spirit to suffer all things for Christ, show that they do not give themselves wholly to him, because they reserve to themselves the right to pass on that suffering component as they are not willing to bear for his sake. In those cases they desire to be excused from being for Christ and his glory, and choose rather that his cause should be set aside for their own ease or interest, and indeed should entirely give way for it. But making such reserves of cases of suffering is certainly inconsistent with truly devoting themselves to God. It is rather being like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), who gave but part, and kept back part of that which they professed to give to the Lord. To give ourselves wholly to Christ implies the sacrificing of our own temporal interest wholly to him. But he that wholly sacrifices his temporal interest to Christ, is ready to suffer all things in his worldly interests for him. If God be truly loved, he is loved as God; and to love him as God, is to love him as the supreme good. But he that loves God as the supreme good, is ready to make all other good give place to that; or, which is the same thing, he is willing to suffer all for the sake of this good.

They that are truly Christians, so fear God, that his displeasure is far more terrible than all earthly afflictions and sufferings. — When Christ is telling his disciples what sufferings they should be exposed to for his sake, he says to them, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him" (Luke 12:4, 5). And so, again, it is said by the prophet, "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (Isaiah 8:13). Now they that are truly Christians see and know him who is so great and dreadful a God, and they know that his displeasure and wrath are far more dreadful than all the temporal sufferings that can be in the way of their duty, and more dreadful than the wrath and cruelty of men, or the worst torments that they can inflict. And therefore they have a spirit to suffer all that can be inflicted, rather than forsake God, and sin against him who can inflict upon them eternal wrath. 2 Corinthians 5:11: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." "Or the fear of the Lord;

by which is meant the grace of the fear of the Lord, implanted in the hearts of the [elect], and in which they acted in their ministry, faithfully dispensing to men the mysteries of grace; from which they could by no means be moved, because the fear of God was before their eyes, and upon their hearts.” – (John Gill).

They that are truly Christians, have that faith whereby they see that which is more than sufficient to make up for the greatest sufferings they can endure in the cause of Christ. — They see that excellency in God and Christ, whom they have chosen for their portion, which far outweighs all possible sufferings. And they see, too, that glory which God has promised to them that suffer for his sake — that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which their sufferings for Christ's sake work out for them, and in comparison with which, the heaviest sorrows and most enduring trials are but "light affliction, which is but for a moment" (2 Corinthians 4:17). Moses' faith is given as a reason why he was willing to suffer affliction with the people of God, and to endure reproach for Christ's sake, because, in the exercise of that faith, he saw something better than the throne and riches of Egypt laid up for him in heaven (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Christ expressly teaches us: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:28-33). The sufferings that are in the way of our duty, are among the difficulties that attend religion. They are part of the cost of being Christ's. He, therefore, that is not willing to meet this cost, never complies with the terms of Christ. He is like the man that wishes his house was built, but is not willing to meet the cost of building it; and so, in effect, refuses to build it. He that does not receive the gospel with all its difficulties, does not receive it as it is proposed to him. He that does not receive Christ with his cross as well as his crown, does not truly receive him at all. It is true that Christ invites us to come to him to find rest, and to buy wine and milk: but then he also invites us to come and take up the cross, and that daily, that we may follow him; and if we come only to accept the former, we do not in truth accept the offer of the gospel, for both go together, the rest and the yoke, the cross and the crown: and it will signify nothing, that, in accepting only the one, we accept what God never offered to us. They that receive only the easy part of Christianity, and not the difficult, at best are but almost Christians; while they that are wholly Christians receive the whole of Christianity, and thus shall be accepted and honored, and not cast out with shame, at the last day.

Without this spirit of willingness to suffer, which the text implies, we cannot be said to forsake all for Christ. — If there be any one kind or degree of temporal suffering that we have not a spirit to undergo for Christ, then there is something that we do not

forsake for him. For example, if we are not willing to suffer reproach for Christ, then we are not willing to forsake honor for him. And so if we are not willing to suffer poverty, pain, and death for his sake, then we are not willing to forsake wealth, ease, and life for him. But Christ is abundant in teaching us, that we must be willing to forsake all that we have for him, if duty requires it, or we cannot be his disciples (Luke 14:26, etc.)

Without this spirit we cannot be said to deny ourselves in the sense in which the Scriptures require us to do it. — The Scriptures teach us, that it is absolutely necessary to deny ourselves in order to our being the disciples of Christ. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it" (Matthew 16:24, 25). These expressions, as here used, signify as much as a man's renouncing himself. And the man who acts according to them in his practice, lives as though he disowned himself for Christ. He puts himself to difficulty or suffering, as though he did not own himself. Christians are said not to acknowledge, but to deny themselves, when they crucify the flesh, and undergo great sufferings for Christ, as though they had no mercy on themselves. Those that will do contrary to the will of Christ and his glory, for the sake of avoiding suffering, deny Christ instead of denying themselves. Those that dare not confess Christ before persecutors, do in fact deny him before men, and are of the number of whom Christ says, that he will deny them before his Father in heaven (Matthew 10:33); and as to whom the apostle says, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:12).

It is the character of all the true followers of Christ, that they follow him in all things. — "These are they," says the beloved disciple, alluding to those about the throne of God — "these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Revelation 14:4). Those that are willing to follow Christ only in prosperity, and not in adversity, or only in some sufferings, and not in all, cannot be said to follow him whithersoever he goeth. We read of one who said to Christ, while he was on earth, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;" and that Christ said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8:19, 20). And by this he signified to him, that if he would follow him wherever he went, he must follow him through great difficulties and sufferings. They that are true followers of Christ, are of the same spirit toward Christ that Ittai the Gittite manifested toward David when it appeared that the entire nation would follow after that worthless Absalom, in not only clinging to him in prosperity, but also in his adversity, even when David would have excused him from going with him. He said, "As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be" (2 Samuel 15:21). Of such a spirit are true Christians toward Christ, the spiritual David.

It is the character of true Christians, that they overcome the world. — "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4). But to overcome the world, implies that we overcome alike its flatteries and frowns, its sufferings and difficulties. These are the weapons of the world, by which it seeks to conquer us; and if there be any of

these that we have not a spirit to encounter for Christ's sake, then by such weapons the world will have us in subjection, and gain the victory over us. But Christ gives his servants the victory over the world in all its forms. They are conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him that hath loved them. (Romans 8:37).

The sufferings in the way of duty are often, in the Bible, called temptations or trials, because by them God tries the sincerity of our character as Christians. — By placing such sufferings in our way, God tries whether we have a spirit to undergo suffering, and so tries our sincerity by suffering, as gold is tried by the fire, to know whether it is pure gold or not. And as by the fire the pure gold may be known from all baser metals, and from all imitations of it; so, by observing whether we are willing to undergo trials and sufferings for Christ's sake, God sees whether we are indeed his people, or whether we are ready to forsake him and his service when any difficulty or danger is in the way. It seems to be with this view that the apostle Peter says to those to whom he wrote, "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6, 7). And again, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; 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" (1 Peter 4:12, 13). And so God by his prophet declares, "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zechariah 13:9).

Christians must examine themselves as Paul exhorts in 2 Corinthians 13:5 whether or not they have the spirit to undergo all sufferings for Christ. It becomes all persons very strictly to examine themselves, whether they are of a suffering spirit or not, seeing such great importance is attached to such a spirit in the Scriptures. Though you never have had the trial of having such great and extreme sufferings laid in the way of your duty, as many others have had, yet you have had enough, in the course of God's providence, to show what your spirit is, and whether you are of a disposition to suffer, and to renounce your own comfort, and ease, and interest, rather than forsake Christ. It is God's manner in his providence, commonly, to exercise all professors of religion, and especially those that may live in times of trial, with trials of this sort, by laying such difficulties in their way as shall make manifest what their spirit is, and whether it be a spirit of self-renunciation or not. It is often the case with Christians who are exposed to persecutions, that if they will cleave to Christ, and be faithful to him, they must suffer in their good name, and in losing the goodwill of others, or in their outward ease and convenience, being exposed to many troubles; or in their estates, being brought into difficulty as to their business; or must do many things that they are exceeding averse to, and that are even dreadful to them. My friends, these trials are a common, frequent, occurrence at Westboro Baptist Church. So, I say to you that for the Lord of the Harvest, that Great Shepherd of the Sheep to bless us so abundantly with these light afflictions here in this place, we are truly blessed above all men in this

world and with Steve I would be so bold as to say in all of human history. Every true Christian has the spirit of a martyr. And if you have not the suffering spirit in the lesser trials or sufferings that God may have sent upon you, how will it be if he should expose you to bitter persecutions? If you cannot bear trials in little things, how can you possess that charity which beareth all things? As the prophet says in another case, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" (Jeremiah 12:5).

Our doctrine today exhorts all professors of religion to cherish a ready spirit, for Christ's sake, to undergo all sufferings that may be in the way of duty. And here consider how happy those persons are represented in the Scriptures to be, who have a spirit to suffer, and do actually suffer, for Christ. "Blessed," says Christ, "are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:10-12). And again, "Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6:21-23). And again, "Unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29). And again, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised. to them that love him" (James 1:12). And again, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye" (1 Peter 3:14).

What glorious rewards God has promised hereafter to bestow on those that do willingly suffer for Christ. It is said that they shall receive a "crown of life;" and Christ promises, that those that forsake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for his name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life (Matthew 19:29). And again we are told, of those who suffer for Christ's sake, that they shall be counted worthy of the kingdom of God (2 Thessalonians 1:5); and again, that it is a faithful saying, that if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him (2 Timothy 2:11, 12); and still again, that if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together with him (Romans 8:17). And we have also the most glorious promises made to those that overcome, and gain the victory over the world — "To him that overcometh," says Christ, "will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," and "he shall not be hurt of the second death;" and "to him will I give to eat of the hidden manna;" and "to him will I give power over the nations;" and "I will give him the morning star;" and "he shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels;" and "him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him my new name;" and "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 2:7, 11,

17, 26, 27, 28; 3:5, 12, 21). Surely promises so rich and abundant as these, should make us willing to undergo all sufferings for the sake of Christ, who will so gloriously reward us for them all.

What glorious rewards God has promised to bestow here on those that do willingly suffer for Christ. Like this in 1 Peter 4:14: "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." The spirit of glory and God resteth upon you are very instructive words: "[A]lluding to Isaiah 11:2 that is, the glorious Spirit of God, as the Syriac version renders it; who is glorious in himself, in the perfections of his nature, being possessed of the same glorious divine essence with the Father and Son; and in his works of grace; and in all his gifts and graces with which he adorns the saints, and makes them glorious: and his resting on them denotes his inhabitation in them, and his abiding with them, and remaining in them; and which appears by the comfort they enjoy in their souls amidst all the reproaches and revilings of men, and by the strength which they have to bear up under and endure shame and persecution for the sake of Christ; and which casts an honour upon them, and makes them both glorious and cheerful."- (John Gill). We glory in tribulations, today. Romans 5:3.

How the Scriptures abound with blessed examples of those that have suffered for Christ's sake. The Psalmist, speaking of the reproach and blasphemy he had suffered from the enemy and avenger, says, "All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant" (Psalm 44:17); and again, "The proud have had me greatly in derision; yet have I not declined from thy law... Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies... Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart standeth in awe of thy word" (Psa. 119:51, 157, 161). And the prophet Jeremiah spake boldly for God, though he was threatened with death for so doing (Jeremiah 26:11, 15). And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down and worship the golden image that the king of Babylon had set up, though they knew they would be cast into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3); and Daniel himself would still faithfully pray to his God, though he expected for it to be shut up in the den of lions (Daniel 6). But the time would fail me to tell of apostles, and prophets, and martyrs, and saints, and of Christ himself, who were faithful alike through good report and evil report, and in sufferings and trials, and who counted not their lives dear, so that they might be faithful to the end. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1, 2). "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Revelation 2:10).

I love you. Amen.