

July 14, 2018

## Dial Daily Bread: Entrusted With an Unusual Gift

Dear Friends of "Dial Daily Bread,"

Are you one of God's special "elite"? Has He entrusted you with an unusual gift, which is fellowship with Christ in His sufferings--the most weighty trust and highest honor God can give to a human being?

An example of someone who was so "entrusted" with honor is John the Baptist who perished alone in a dungeon; he now stands higher even than Elijah or Enoch, both of whom were translated without tasting death. If you have been called of God to suffer for Jesus' sake, "rejoice," says Jesus Himself, "for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:12). This is backward from normal worldly (or even church) thinking, but it is truth illustrated all through the Bible.

Think of Paul the apostle. The Lord told Ananias that "he is a chosen vessel of Mine ... for I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15, 16). Saul became Paul, who details for us his almost endless sufferings for Christ in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. You wonder why the Lord let Paul suffer such an unusually heavy portion of suffering; the reason must be that he had persecuted the church in a most unusual frenzy of hatred.

Someday in the Kingdom you will be walking down one of those delightful paths and you will meet him face to face. He will give you a handshake with a smile and tell you who he is and who he was, and he'll recite that list of agonies he endured and then he will ask you, Tell me, what sufferings did you endure for Christ's sake? How happy you will be if you can engage in a genuine conversation with him, and realize your fellowship with Paul!

Then, think of Jeremiah. Before he was "formed in the womb," the Lord "knew" him and "sanctified" him (Jer. 1:5); that is, set him apart for a special life of suffering, chose him to endure a life of tears all the way down to death. Others who have suffered for the Lord, such as Joseph oppressed by his ten brothers or David hunted like a wild beast by King Saul ("the Lord's anointed!"), saw their dreams fulfilled within their lifetimes; but not Jeremiah. The anguish of rejection by the perverse people of the Lord went on and on until the poor man perished alone somewhere in Egypt. He lies in some unmarked grave.

Yet after his death, the Jews began to think, and decided he was "the greatest of the prophets." That's why a sizable group began to wonder if Jesus of Nazareth was Jeremiah come back from the dead (Matt. 16:13, 14). Yet Jesus was only in His early 30s! They recognized in Jesus the "Suffering Servant," a likeness in spirit to the weeping prophet. Whoever you are, whatever your burden, "rejoice."

*--Robert J. Wieland*

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