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ABUNDANT GRACE FROM GOD FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

1 Peter 4:12-19; Acts 11:26

Christians have abundant grace from God that is sufficient to make them go through persecution. Therefore, we should **“rejoice, inasmuch as [we] are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, [we] may be glad also with exceeding joy”**. A Christian is one who has turned away from sin to the Saviour, believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God bears witness in his heart that he is a child of God. The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch because of the dynamism of their faith, which was obvious in their character, conduct and lifestyle.

Christians are Christlike. They are also, one, *converted* (Acts 3:19,26). A person who is not converted is not a Christian because he does not have a change of heart and life. Two, *cleansed* (Ezekiel 36:25-27). When God sprinkles the cleansing water on you, **“ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness”**. Three, *righteous* (Romans 6:18,22). Saved by grace, Christians are **“free from sin”** and become **“servants of righteousness”**. Four, *godly* (Titus 2:11,12). The grace of God in the lives of believers makes them godly. Five, *just* (Hebrews 10:38,39). Living by faith makes Christians just. Six, *obedient* (1 Peter 1:14-16). The former lusts for disobedience are taken away. Seven, *harmless* (Philippians 2:15,16). They will not hurt a neighbour, friend or enemy.

1. THE PREDICTED PERSECUTION OF GODLY CHRISTIANS

1 Peter 4:12,15,16

There are three things to consider here:

(i). The present persecution of godly Christians

1 Peter 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:12-14; Acts 14:22; John 16:33; Romans 8:18,28

Persecutions are meant to try one’s claim to salvation, confidence in God and conviction in His word. Persecution is not strange; it happens to every Christian because God permits it so that we can prove that we are His children. If they persecuted Christ, the people of the world will also persecute us. For **“all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”** In spite of this, we must continue to grow stronger in the Lord.

(ii). The pronounced punishment of guilty creatures

1 Peter 4:15

“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”. A real child of God must not suffer as, one, a murderer (1 John 3:12-15; Genesis 4:13); two, a thief (Psalm 50:18,22; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Joshua 7:10-12,21,25); three, an evildoer (Isaiah 1:4-6,16-20; 9:17; 13:11). Evildoers are evil in their hearts and action, nature and deeds, character and relationships. Four, a busybody (1 Timothy 5:12,13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,11,14). A busybody is usually not busy about his life, progress and commitment, but busy about things that concern other people.

(iii). **The pleasant personality of God-glorifying Christians**

1 Peter 4:16; Galatians 1:23,24; Matthew 5:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:11,12; 1 Peter 2:11,12; 4:11

A real Christian who has grace in his heart with the goal of getting to heaven is a pleasant personality to God, heaven and the children of God. His light beams forth. However, it takes effort, commitment, consecration and vigilance to **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”**. We must **“walk worthy of God”** so that our lives would please Him.

2. THE PURIFIED PARTAKERS WITH THE GLORIFIED CHRIST

1 Peter 4:13,14

There are three things to note:

(i). **The peaceful partakers of Christ’s suffering**

1 Peter 4:13; Romans 8:17,18; 5:1-5; 12:18-21; Philippians 4:7-9

We must rejoice when we suffer for Christ because **“when his glory shall be revealed, [we] may be glad also with exceeding joy”**. In the midst of the suffering of this present time, the peace of God will reign in our hearts. The Scripture also assures us that **“the God of peace shall be with [us]”**.

(ii). **The purified partakers of Christ’s sanctification**

1 Peter 4:14; Malachi 3:3; Ephesians 5:25-27; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 12:10-14

Believers who are sanctified have their heart, language, disposition, attitude, character and comportment cleansed. They are purified partakers of Christ’s holiness. After salvation, a believer must go back to God for the sanctification experience so as to be able to follow peace with all men.

(iii). **The powerful partakers of Christ’s Spirit**

1 Peter 4:14; 2 Corinthians 12:9,10; 2 Timothy 2:10-12; 3:10-12; 4:16-18; Isaiah 40:28-31

A saved believer has grace that is sufficient for temptation, trial and persecution. After sanctification, greater and abundant grace comes upon him or her to live a holy life. The grace increases when the believer is baptized, filled and energised by the Holy Ghost. Apostle Paul, writing to Timothy who knew about his **“Persecutions [and] afflictions”** said, **“but out of them all the Lord delivered me”**. We also have the same grace, and the Lord **“will deliver [us] from every evil work”**.

3. THE PROMISED PRESERVATION BY OUR GLORIOUS CREATOR

1 Peter 4:17-19; Exodus 15:11-18

“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”. Our sanctification, godliness and righteousness are the will of God. Thus, we must not allow the pressure of persecution to stop us from doing His will. To keep doing well in persecution, we must commit our lives, inheritance and destiny to God.

There are three things to note:

(i). **Persevering continuation in godliness despite persecution**

1 Peter 4:17,18; 1 Timothy 3:15,16; Hebrews 12:14; 2 Peter 1:3-9; 3:10-14

We must continue in godliness despite persecution. Christ wants us to abide as we come into a relationship with Him.

(ii). Permanent condemnation for ungodliness and perversion

1 Peter 4:17,18; Romans 1:18,29-32; 2:8,9; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Jude 1:14-16

There is permanent condemnation for those who are ungodly and perverted, who have not obeyed the gospel that calls them to repentance and new life in Christ. **“The wrath of God”** will be on all unconverted, backslidden, compromising and unrighteous people. **“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? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”**

(iii). Personal commitment to God for preservation

1 Peter 4:19; 1 Corinthians 10:13,14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 4:18 with 1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Corinthians 1:10; Jude 1:21,24,25

Christ wants us to commit the keeping of our souls to Him. He is faithful to moderate the trial, temptation and persecution that come to us. Those who have gone before us endured, persevered and gave themselves fully to the Lord who kept and conserved them until the end. If Christ preserved those who lived in the most dangerous time in Christendom, He will also preserve us **“unto his heavenly kingdom”**.

GHS 105, 258 & 27