



AFTER THIS

A S H A K E T H E N A T I O N S D E V O T I O N A L

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. Acts 9:15-18

What happens when we are in the Will of God, walking with clean hands and pure hearts, yet the trials still come? Yes, we can make choices that have consequences. We can create our own difficulties. But when trials come when we are upright and pressing into the life of righteousness in which we have been called, how do we process that? Turn to the Word! Jesus always has the answers.

Saints, there is purpose in the pain: Look at the example of Jesus, Himself. The spotless Lamb of God was crucified on our behalf. The sinless Son of the Living God was tortured literally to death and bared the burden of the wrath of God for humanity, you and me. He was without sin! Yet, He suffered in ways that no man ever has nor ever will.

In his letters to the churches, Peter, after encouraging them in their incorruptible inheritance, the living hope found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, then comments on their grief that various trials have caused. The Bible tells us about the purpose in 1 Peter 1:7-8, "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love..." Do we believe what we profess? Do we believe that Jesus is Lord regardless of our circumstances? The trials help solidify our grasp of the reality of Jesus. The hope of our salvation is the fuel that leads to a joy inexpressible and full of glory. As we go through the fire, we are either purified or destroyed. We either press into God or give up on God. When we choose to seek God through the trial and make it to the other side, the resultant joy is that we have had an opportunity to obtain a deeper revelation of Jesus Christ.

The benefit of trials is to know Christ! The Apostle Paul states it so simply, yet so profound in Philippians 3:10, "I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings..." We can stop short in this verse. So oftentimes, we forget the knowing of Jesus that comes from the fellowship of His sufferings. There is so much power in sharing your trials with Jesus! This is not a call to pretend like everything is okay when the world is crashing down around you. Devastation can come in many forms, be it the death of a loved one, the complexity of family, religious persecution, famine, or war – yet, in that, we still see the possibility of inexpressible joy because we experience the power and the presence of Jesus at a deeper level.

Look at the vision given to Ananias in preparation for him to go to Saul (before he was the Apostle Paul). Ananias knew how much harm Saul had done to the saints in Jerusalem. He had been given the same authority to do the same damage to the believers in Damascus, where Ananias was. "But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My Name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My Name's sake'" (Acts 9:15-16). What?! Chosen vessel and suffering used in the same breath?! Yes. This is the same man that wrote Philippians 3:10! Being in the will of God does not eliminate trials and suffering! Another point that is fascinating in this passage from Acts is distinguishing between what God told Ananias and what Ananias told Saul. The Lord shares with Ananias the depth of the call on Saul's life and the pending suffering in store. Ananias, however, reveals the purpose of his visit is so that Saul may receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the Lord shares with us things that don't need to be said. What we are to convey is the strength that they have offered to them through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are to inform and sometimes remind those to whom we are sent that they will have the support necessary to make it to the other side of the trial. Saul was given both a physical sight and a spiritual sight that day. The scales fell from his eyes and he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. This is the only way that we can walk deeper into fellowship with Jesus in the suffering. We must be filled afresh daily with the reality of who Jesus is by the power of the Holy Spirit. A new perspective, new understanding, new revelation!

Make a choice in the trials to draw closer to God, not farther away. Being emptied of self for closer access to Him truly, truly, truly leads to a joy and satisfaction that cannot be explained, nor can it ever be taken away.