

PERSEVERING UNDER THE BURDEN

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We have been on a journey together of learning to bear the burden of the Lord. But with that burden comes tremendous battle and a level of wholehearted commitment that requires everything you've got. You might be starting to realize how quickly the burden of the Lord can be lost, or feel like it's there one moment but gone the next. It can feel like the cares of this life choke out the burden, and thus true ministry, because it all begins with the burden. Even to minister to the Lord you must have that burden.

It is so easy for our hearts to become tired of the fight when what God has made precious to us to comes under such battle. We can grow weary of the conflict when we realize this war goes on and on with no end in sight. Does there always have to be conflict? The answer is yes. In this life you are going to have tribulation, and you must settle that issue. Jesus was straight forward about it:

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. – John 16:33

Tribulation is going to come with regularity; God is going to use it to refine us and try us. Much of the church is out there trying to rebuke things off of us. God, the Holy Spirit, is trying to get things in us and awaken us to them by use of conflict. When God leads you into a battle, stay in it. Just stay there, and having done everything to stand, stand! Let God be the mighty warrior that He is.

So much of this battle comes down to our self. We will never be satisfied with Jesus fully until God breaks some things in our self-life. He brings self down and He rises; He fills where self had filled us. This is a great battle, isn't it? But we need to stay in it. You will never get to a place in this life where you can say, "Well I'm done with self!" I wish that were true, but I have not found that to be true, and you will not find that to be true. Paul makes that very clear at the end of His life. He is still in the battle, and He is not half-hearted about it.

Are we whole-hearted in this battle or are we half-hearted in this battle? Are we dulled down or are we still burning with the inward fire of Christ? Is there more territory that the Lord would take in us as a people, more that He would dominate as a people, more that He would give of

Himself, share of Himself? Is there more that He would bestow upon us in the fullness of His Son? Have we conquered all?

The Lord is conquering in us and still gaining ground. This is going to take something called vigilance. The fruit of the Spirit of self-control takes two parts: vigilance and diligence. When I approached the throne one specific time, I was seeing the steps in the reverse order in the fruit of the Spirit. The bottom step was self-control on the front side, but as I went around the throne, written on the other sides were Vigilance and Diligence. I know those are intricately linked. The control of self is what is in view. But make no mistake: control of self is not done by us, but by the Holy Spirit. Unless the Spirit controls you, you are not His.

Vigilance and diligence are needed in this warfare. You are in battle for your very soul. You are in battle for the very destiny of God in you and in your family. You are in battle for the destiny of Christ in you at all times, and it does not go away. There are no rest areas where you pull over for a while. The rest has to come by the knowing of the Lord. He becomes your rest. He becomes your confidence. He becomes everything to us. Here is the great question: "How does Christ become everything?" And I do mean everything. If He is not everything to us, we must carry on. That progression includes the trying of our faith, which is more precious than gold. It includes battle and warfare. It includes suffering for His name sake. It is inescapable and includes the working of the cross, the dying of the Lord in me so that He may be the resurrection; the only life in me. So carry on, soldier.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. – 1 Peter 1:6-7