

Overcoming Tribulation

11-29-15

The word “Tribulation” is used repeatedly in the Bible. It literally refers to a great suffering or struggle; one which leaves us changed in our lives. There is a “Tribulation Prophecy” in Matthew 24:15-22 which says that before the temple was destroyed in Jerusalem (AD 70) that there would be a great tribulation on Christians, “such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be”. The New Testament reveals that Christians suffered persecution by the Jews (e.g. Acts 17:13 & 2 Thessalonians 1:4), later a persecution by the Romans (Acts 12:1), and even natural calamities (Acts 11:28). These prophecies no longer apply to us, as they were to happen to the generation alive at that time (Matthew 24:34).

But there is another “Tribulation Prophecy” that does apply to us: “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). All Saints will have tribulations. They are necessary for our entry into heaven (Acts 14:22). To overcome them we need to go into a “tribulation mode” not unsimilar to the admonition of Jesus to the first century saints; we need to put on the mind of Christ and act in the promises that allow us to overcome.

Putting on the Mind of Christ in tribulation means understand why we suffer. We must acknowledge that sometimes it is our fault (Romans 2:9 & Revelation 2:22). Bad decisions & behavior cause difficulties in our lives; they may not be sins (like marrying an unbeliever or moving to an area without brethren), but they put us in positions that we will suffer. Too, sinful conduct has consequences. We need to acknowledge when tribulation is our doing.

Putting on the mind of Christ in tribulation means acknowledging that sometimes it is not our fault (e.g. Hebrews 10:32-33). Sometimes we suffer because of others sin, or because of the nature of the world. We need to be able to understand when it is not our doing.

Why does God permit us to suffer? Having the mind of Christ causes us to see that sometimes tribulation is needed. IT causes us to grow (Mark 4:17, Acts 11:19). It causes us to have an actual and real view of life (2 Timothy 1:8-13); no one who does not want to go to heaven will go to heaven, and people who are doing well in life usually don’t want to go to heaven. Too, tribulation brings us hope (Romans 5:3-5), and hope “does not disappoint”. Finally, without tribulation we would lack trust; trust in God and trust in our brethren (Galatians 6:2-3).

Remember those first century brethren? They overcame the greatest tribulations because they put on the mind of Christ and then accepted the changes necessary to overcome. We need to know that tribulation ends in victory if we put on the mind of Christ.