

Tough Times

“...We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

Some people believe in what we might describe as a watered-down gospel. This diluted version of the true gospel promises forgiveness, but rarely tells you of the need to repent of your sins.

It's a gospel that promises peace and plenty, but never warns of persecution. It's a gospel that says God wants you to be healthy and wealthy, and never have any problems to speak of. It's a gospel that says you can so wrap yourself in God's favor that there will always be a parking space available for you at the mall. That's not the gospel of the New Testament. I can assure you that the last thing on Paul's mind was "How can I find a great parking space?" He had other objectives that gripped his heart and soul.

Does this mean that God wants you to be sick, poor, and miserable? That He doesn't want you to be happy? No, I believe that happiness will come as you really follow the Lord. But it is a byproduct, a fringe benefit of belonging to God in Christ.

The essence of the Christian life is knowing God and walking with Him. It's about sticking with Him when the sky is blue and also when it's filled with clouds or choked with smoke. It's about walking with the Lord through thick and thin, and pressing on through every heartache and trial that happens to come our way.

Storm Warnings

Jesus made it clear that storms will enter every life. But it is through these storms and hardships and tribulations that we will enter God's kingdom.

As Dr. Luke phrased it: "And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God'" (Acts 14:21-22).

We don't always like to read a verse like that. It's probably not a passage we want to put on a plaque and hang by our front door. We would rather the passage read, "Through many days of perpetual happiness, we enter the kingdom of God." But that isn't Scripture, and that isn't life. Trials and tribulations will come.

Job said it well: "Man who is born of woman is of few days and **full of trouble**" (Job 14:1).

Donald