

#74 THE DREAM.....

Someone comes up to me and hands me a necklace of purple pearls.

Purple again symbolizes high rank or royalty on one hand, yet on the other speaks of sorrow and suffering. Pearls speak of beautiful and precious spiritual fruit that are produced from suffering. The pearls are a package deal. Like the cross and the crown of faith and works they are meant to be taken together. As in a previous dream of purple dye being made from the death of a mollusk, objects of value are very costly. Most of us know the simple process of how pearls are formed. First a grain of sand or a rough object is inserted into the flesh of the oyster. The oyster begins to secrete a substance to cover the object which is irritating and painful to its flesh. After much time and many layers of secretions the grain of sand become a smooth beautiful pearl.

Common to us is a similar illustration of a blister on our foot. We buy a pair of shoes and find parts of the shoe rub away at our foot. Because we like the shoes and perhaps can not find another similar pair, we decide to keep them. Soon the shoe wears a raw, painful place on our skin that will fill with water and burn. We may hobble around a bit very aware of that blister's presence. That blister may burst and dry, and new skin will be formed under it as the outer layer of skin hardens and thickens. A callus is then produced which has no nerve endings to feel pain, and soon we find those shoes fit to suit us!

Our first reaction to any kind of suffering is to alleviate it. Much suffering is needless. Suffering can be caused by the devil, the reaping of our flesh, or by God's permission to mature us. The suffering that we are mainly concerned with here is that which is meant to produce a good spiritual result. Suffering is not the purpose of spiritual maturity, it is a means to spiritual maturity. We are talking about suffering for righteousness' sake. These other types of suffering have many sources and, though many are not God's best for us, He will waste nothing in our lives to cause all to work together for good.

For example, consider the souls subdued by drugs taken for pleasure or wasted by diseases caused by their promiscuous sexual lifestyles. These are punishments in themselves for making sin out of things that in themselves are neutral (by neutral, I mean drugs and sex have their proper place). We may call drunkenness the disease of alcoholism; this disease, however, is the result of alcohol abuse which the Bible calls sin. Many diseases originate from the abuse of sexual relations that the Bible only sanctions for the marriage bed between a man and a woman. God can and does forgive these sins that are confessed and repented. He can cause good to come out of anything, although we dare not call these sins good and acceptable in themselves.

Now the apostle Peter has much to say about proper suffering:

"But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye..." (I Peter 3:14 KJV).

"For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (I Peter 3:17 KJV).

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves like-wise with the same mind..." (I Peter 4:1 KJV).

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings...”
(I Peter 4:12-13 KJV).

“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” (I Peter 4:19 KJV).

“...knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren (true believers) that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (I Peter 5:9-10 KJV).

These words explain much of the true proper suffering we will endure. Much comes from the devil’s attacks through people, through the world’s system, and greatly from our own fleshly nature that wars against us. Taking up our cross involves suffering of a proper sort in subduing that lower nature. It is vain to think we will not suffer for Christ and for His kingdom; therefore many verses are used because this is a hard saying to many. God is building a spiritual church out of spiritual jewels, and they take some suffering to produce!

If His will is for us suffering to bear
I then must trust in His perfect care,
For when that purpose comes to full end
A crown of jewels we will win.
But, if we resist the Refiner’s hands
And do not submit to His commands
To bear the suffering for Christ below
And as He did to the cross we must go,
Then we miss the best that God can give;
In deeper waters we can not live.
We stay in the shallow waters there to sup
For we have refused to take and drink the bitter cup.
Let us ask God for great grace to do all His perfect will
Leaving the lower valleys to climb the higher hills.
Those paths may be rough with pain
Yet crowns of jewels we will obtain.

R.F.H.P.