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THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SAINTS

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"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." (Revelation 14.12)

These words were given to John on the island of Patmos, in the context of the last days when, according to the book of Revelation, Satan along with his assailants, "the beasts of the sea and land", will develop unholy fellowship in fighting against the saints.

We know that Satan's battle against the saints is not any real news. Many saints in history have had to endure various temptations and difficulties from the evil one.

Nobody likes to be tempted nor do they enjoy trials and warfare, but these hardships are, in a way, indicators of the seriousness and depth of our walk with Jesus.

Recently a brother asked me how I was doing, to which I answered that, as usual, that we had a lot of activities and therefore a lot of battles. He calmly replied by saying that this was a good sign that we were going the right way.

✦ **Nobody likes to be tempted nor do they enjoy trials and warfare, but these hardships are, in a way, indicators of the seriousness and depth of our walk with Jesus.**



We may be sure that when we as believers “fight the good fight of faith”, then opposition will appear. Opposition only comes to dedicated Christians who are full of love for Jesus and are willing to actively expand the Kingdom of God. To undedicated Christians opposition does not come because it is not necessary.

The Satan does not sleep as many Christians who sleep. The body is still alive and therefore we should always be ready to fight because “on our left and right there are enemies who never rest”, as one preacher said.

For Christians who live a victorious life without suffering the statement of Jesus is shocking as it was to Peter when Jesus told him that Satan would sift him as wheat: *«Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.»* (Luke 22.31)

The Greek word used here for “asked” is *exalteo*, which means to demand or ask back for something given. In other words Jesus said: *“Satan has asked to have you back...”* That is his original goal, to bring you back into his kingdom.

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interesting to mention that Jesus did not say to Peter that He would keep him from troubles and Satan’s temptations rather he prayed that Peter’s faith in these trials would not fail. (Luke 22.31-32)

Saints, it is no wonder that we experience trials, difficulties and rejection. As the Apostle Paul says, this is our “destiny”, the integral part of every dedicated believer. *“...that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.”* (1 Thessalonians 3.3-4)

Peter, the Apostle to whom Jesus said that Satan would tempt, was the same person who later encouraged believers when he said to them *“not to think it strange”*, talking about trials that the Christians were suffering. *“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you!”* (1 Peter 4.12)

All such temptations, “fiery trials”, testings, difficulties and tribulations have the purpose of strengthening you in your walk with Jesus. Problems are an essential part of Christianity. Even John in the book of Revelation said that he was a participant in trials and therefore found himself on the island of Patmos. *“I, John, both your*

brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Revelation 1.9)

Therefore I want to encourage you, when you fall into tribulation not to withdraw from Jesus or the local body but have patience in battle and come out on the other side as winners!

In these moments our attitudes often change, we can see better the status of our heart and realize what we are really like.

Usually after weeks or months of signs and wonders the newly born Christian becomes shocked finding themselves experiencing problems and asking how this could have happened to them. Often they condemn Jesus thinking that if God was with them such things would not have happened.

In this phase they mature from their childish beliefs to a deeper relationship with Jesus; only in this way can Jesus eliminate each part that obstructs His relationship with them

I am not sure whether it is easier to move forward with Jesus or to finish your own race in life, but nevertheless we must finish. Ecclesiastes says: *“The end of a thing is better than its beginning; the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.” (Ecclesiastes 7.8)* So we come to

the first foundation of the saints, which is important for our everyday walk with Jesus, especially in the hard times.

► **1. THE PATIENCE OF THE SAINTS**

Let us return to the original text. We can see that patience is the first foundation and a necessary element in each trial.

“... Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” (Revelation 13.10)

Another translation reads that in the trials caused by the serpent along with the beasts *“Patience is needed for it...”* The Greek word for stability is *hupomone*; patience or endurance in such circumstances.

According to my experience, knowing myself and listening to others, patience is one of the foundations which today’s believers are missing in their lives. As trials begin to come many of believers immediately bind Satan or, if this does not work, ask God to answer their prayers requesting a reply within 24 hours or one week at the latest.

★ **All temptations, testings, difficulties and tribulations have the purpose of strengthening you in your walk with Jesus.**



Others, when experiencing trials, very quickly and thoughtlessly turn away from their biblical beliefs, standing on them in words only. People often want to avoid trials and do not understand that only through them they can become more mature and realize what is in their heart.

Therefore, they fall into pernicious traps, making quick decisions; they fail their ministries, enter into wrong relationships, attend erroneous churches, they take situations in their own hands and miss out on God's will for their lives.

Today everyone wants their situations to be solved quickly, forgetting the fact that nothing happens immediately. We can immediately decide to follow Jesus but our character and our life need time to acclimate to it. The Apostle Paul said: "...*patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.*" (Romans 12.12)

One preacher once said that sometimes the greatest strength is simple patience. To us it is simpler to ask the Lord to bless our efforts instead of waiting for Him. We want to be

ready for ministry within a year forgetting that in biblical history some waited for 40 years. As soon as we begin attending church we think we are ready for marriage, forgetting that some have waited for 14 years – like Jacob who waited for Rachel. We want to build churches or movements forgetting that the events described in the book of Acts are a summary of a 30-year span of ministry.

The word "patience" surely is not a word you often find in charismatic churches, because rather than prayer commands are given to God; rather than admittance to the real situation proclamations are made. The faith that is not patient is not true faith. Unfortunately, faith is a source for profit for many people.

James gave us an example: "*My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord – that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.*" (James 5.10-11)

Job lost his children, property, and friends but was still patient toward God. He did not ask: "God, where are you now?" or "What kind of God is that who loves me?" or, as we often do, accuse people around him. He said: "*The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD!*" (Job 1.20b)

★ **In these moments our attitudes often change, we can see better the status of our heart and realize what we are really like.**

Moses, Elijah and Jeremiah bore trials and persecution but did not turn from the Lord or accuse others around them; they were patient and stable. This is the first foundation of the saints.

Apart from patience, which can assist us in troubles, we come to the second foundation of the saints; faith.

▶ 2. THE FAITH OF THE SAINTS

“Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” (Revelation 13.10)

In times of trouble and temptation it is necessary to believe and lean on Jesus. Our mistake is that we often rely on our own strength and abilities or on others around us. Although it is good to talk with someone and share our problems as we often receive good advice, but best advice we can get is from Jesus.

It is easy to have faith when we finish college, find a good job, buy a house, get married, have children, buy a car, and have money left over for a rainy day. This is to be desired and there is nothing wrong with it. But will we believe in God if our child dies, if our wife curses us, if we lose our house, our car is stolen, or we get fired because we refuse to compromise our values?

The Apostle Paul was proud of the Thessalonian church not because they

had 300 believers, or because they built a beautiful building, or because they had good preachers. He was proud because their faith was stable during trials and persecution.

They did not go back to the world when their lives became difficult; they remained firm in the faith. According to Paul, patience and faith is the key to surviving trials and persecution.

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, 4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure.” (2 Thessalonians 1.3-4)

When we face severe trials we simply have to believe in God that He will use them for our good and for His glory. We know that God is just and will not leave us. In His perfect time He will free us from these temporary difficulties and punish those

✦ **People often want to avoid trials and do not understand that only through them they can become more mature and realize what is in their heart.**



who persecute us. Can we have faith in the justice of His perfect timing?

“Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting” (2 Thessalonians 1.6-8, 9a)

In the 11th chapter of Hebrews there are many examples of faith. The author clearly says: *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11.1)* Faith is, in fact, heightening our awareness of the true situation based on past experiences that show us that God will come again in a new and surprising way and work in our life as He did before.

We end up looking funny to those around us because we become terrified of the temporary life crises going on around us forgetting the awful circumstances Jesus miraculously brought us out of. Therefore the Scriptures

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say “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11.6)

Noah is just one example. In Hebrews 11.7 we read that *“By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”*

Noah experienced rejection because he was different than his neighbors. Think about how it was to live in the middle of the desert and to start building a big ship. How would people react? Faith is that which made Noah different than the unbelievers that were around him. Although they were mocking him, God released the waters and condemned the world; but Noah, having faith, saved his family. Faith will sometimes require us to do things that are not normal to the world around us.

The faith is the second foundation of the saints and will surely help us in any difficult situation. With faith we come to the third foundation – obedience, and this is very firmly bound to the second one.

► **3. THE OBEDIENCE OF THE SAINTS**

“Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God

and the faith of Jesus.” (Revelation. 14.12)
True faith is always connected with the obedience. Noah built the ark by faith, but he was also obedient to God. He built it even when it did not make sense to him.

Obedience caused him to be different. According to my experience I have observed that compromising believers can not fellowship with obedient ones, mainly because in such company their disobedience becomes visible. It is important to be obedient without fear because He will not demand something impossible to be done! If He asks you to do something He probably can provide the necessary strength.

It is not difficult to have convictions about something when everything is going well in our life; but how hard it is stick to the same convictions when we are tempted. It often happens that we have good convictions until the first temptation and all of a sudden they change. This can be a sign that our walk with Jesus is not healthy.

Jesus clearly said, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven”* (Matthew 7.21)

It is easier to boast about own stories and spiritual experiences but our daily walk reveals the true picture.

Not everyone who talks about heaven will go to heaven. Jesus is more interested in our walk with Him than how we talk about Him. He wants us to do what is right not just talk about it.

How many times have we violated our conscience because of people; either at college, work, or home, because we are often afraid of their reactions? Are we ready to answer clearly as the apostles did to their accuser and persecutors? *“We ought to obey God rather than men.”* (Acts 5.29)

Obedience always goes along with faith and patience. It is the only way to endure the trials and tribulations of this world and Satan who alone wants to bring us back to him.

The Scriptures say that Jesus, although He was the Son of God *“yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.”* (Hebrews 5.8-9)

Patience, faith and obedience are the foundations of the saints who will survive in spite of Satan’s attacks, temptations

★ **Faith will sometimes require us to do things that are not normal to the world around us.**



or persecution and these saints will have eternal life.

► **4. THE OUTCOME OF THE SAINTS**

Although at first sight everything does not seem simple, God promises good results. It is possible to lose a good job, worldly pleasures, friends, or family but this is nothing compared to what God offers us; eternal life.

The truth is that it is hard to maintain purity from this world, to be patient, believe, or to be obedient when the mind differs against the spirit and when friends mock us. But only in this way can we have peace and rest at the end of it all.

We cannot take money, popularity or stuff with us when we pass on but if we continue to remain stable on these foundations of the saints we will bear lasting fruit that will live on after we are gone.

It is important that our values are God's values and that we bear eternal, not temporary, fruit. Eternity is more important:

Therefore Jesus said: *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven!" (Matthew 5.10)*

"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." (Revelation 14.13)

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