

Rejoicing in Suffering

I have been looking closely at the events of the last few days in Charlottesville, West Virginia. A member of the Ku Klux Klan ran his car into a number of people marching in protest of the KKK, killing one and injuring many. A friend of mine made a statement about the event that made me stop and think. He said “This is not political. This is about basic human decency, morality, the fundamentals of my Faith, and the heart of Christ.” And he’s absolutely right. My response to him and to others who weighed in on the incident is what I want to share in this NEWSLETTER article.

No matter what we do or say, hatred, bigotry, and sin are inevitable. We cannot any more change everyone’s heart that Jesus could. Those conditions will always exist in this wicked world, and most certainly it is our job to use God’s word to oppose it.

We have to recognize that the evil in this world is something we must go through in order to receive our reward. James calls those things “pure joy” because opposing them and triumphing over them makes our faith stronger and our ability to overcome them guarantees our reward. Here are his words on the subject:

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”
(James 1:2-4)

Peter said in 1 Peter 1:3-9:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

And in 1 Peter 4:12-14:

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”

Living this life is hard. We are tempted to do wrong, say wrong, act wrong. We must combat all forms of hatred and sin with the word of God and look upon our temptations as blessings. Living for God, in the face of all the evil in the world, strengthens our faith and helps us to overcome the world. Our reward awaits, and in that I rejoice!