

Serious Questions - a Strong Message

by Stella Paterson

This article has been "in the works" for several weeks and now is the time to get it done and published.

We find ourselves in increasingly fearful times. Should we be fearful? Millions are! These times should come as no surprise, for our Lord warned repeatedly, as did His apostles the beloved brethren who walked with Him. Even before the birth of Messiah, there were the prophets of old. Before them were men like Enoch, Elijah, and others who KNEW God. We have the record of Jehovah's dealings with Israel, and the methods He chose to preserve a people for Himself. He chose to offer salvation to a "people who were not a people" (Gentiles) in order to provoke Israel to jealousy. Just as Jehovah had His "wife" (Israel), His Son Jesus has a Bride whom He anxiously awaits to take to Himself. But is she ready? What will it take for the Bride to be free of her "spots and wrinkles" as described in Ephesians 5:27?

The two main things the Lord is looking for in His Bride are "love" and "faith." These we have enlarged upon in previous articles.

It is urgent that we do take a more in-depth look at the aspect of faith which is what Jesus will be looking for when He returns. (Luke 18:8) Not only does our eternal salvation depend upon it, but survival in these extremely turbulent times is even more dependent upon our faith in the crucified and risen Savior.

Let me share how the Lord "jump started" the unfolding of this message. On numerous days as I gazed out the windows at the small saplings surrounding the property here, I wondered at their ability to withstand the winds we have here on the Canadian prairies. One day, the wind would be from one direction, and then on others it would blow with such force the small trees would bend as though they might break. But in reality they were becoming stronger with the seeming "winds of adversity" from all directions. One morning, I received an email from a friend who said she had prayed for me that morning. These were her words: "I continue to ask our Father for the strengthening of your body and for some reason I also pray for clarity of mind?" I wondered what the Lord was saying, that He would have her pray for "clarity of mind." She did not know, nor did I. It wasn't until later that morning I found myself gazing at the wind-blown saplings in the yard. With my thoughts once again on how much stronger they would be, the words "rooted and grounded" came to my now-"clear" mind. In a flash of revelation, this article was cemented in my thoughts, to be enlarged upon by the Lord over the next weeks.

With that revelation so fresh in my mind, I ran to the computer, opened up e-Sword and searched quickly for the reference containing "rooted and grounded."

Then I checked the meanings of the words and other references where they were used. Needless to say, I became quite excited at what the Lord was showing me.

Rooted and grounded

When trees are blown to and fro by the winds, their roots become strong. When rain does not come, their roots go deep in search of moisture. They become "rooted and grounded" in the soil where they were planted. Their true growth is unseen, below the ground, but the visible things are the ever-strengthening trunks, branches, and leaves reaching heavenward to receive the life-giving sunshine. Their beauty can be seen--a testament to their strength which comes from where they are rooted and grounded.

The Greek word translated "root" means "(figuratively) become stable" and the word "grounded" means "to lay a basis for." The reference where we find "rooted and grounded" is Ephesians 3:17. The King James Version uses those words, but I will quote the passage from the English Majority Text Version.

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom every family in heaven and upon earth takes its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man, that **Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith**; being **rooted and founded** in love, that you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height--and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-19)

Notice the close relationship between "faith" and "love."

That one Greek word for "rooted" can be found in only two places in the New Testament. The second reference is Colossians 2:6-7:

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been **rooted** and built up in Him and being **established in the faith**, just as you were taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. (EMTV)

The Greek word translated "built up" is defined as "to *build upon*, that is, (figuratively) to *rear up*." It is used here, in Jude 20-21:

But you, beloved, **building yourselves up** in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, anticipating the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. (EMTV)

There has never been a time when it was more urgent that we examine ourselves to be certain our "roots" are grounded in the only Hope we have. Can we maintain that hope in Christ by arrogantly quoting back to Him His words,

demanding that He do what He said He would? Is the "word of faith" intended to be used in that manner? What kind of person is Jesus looking for to bestow His grace upon? Hear the words of the prophet Isaiah:

For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity [resides eternally], whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place ['place' inserted by translators], with him also that is of a **contrite** [crushed] and humble [depressed] spirit, to revive the spirit of the **humble**, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones [bruised]. (Isaiah 57:15)

Time is so short and we still have ever-increasing multitudes of "ministers" of "the gospel," who are unaware they have been caught up in amazing deception. They go their merry way, influencing throngs of equally deceived followers who hang on their every word--all because they once spoke a few words of truth. God is dealing with some, and will continue to deal with countless others, in the promised judgment upon His house. Are they listening? Will they listen? What will it take to cause them to humble themselves before Almighty God and "come clean" with their followers in the hope that some might be turned back to the Truth? We know from Scripture that such is unlikely. The "mighty" seem to have an aversion to humility. Oh, the price that will be paid by those who have "offended the little ones" they "brought to Jesus" but who were soon turned to following after those self-important, pseudo-ministers! If only they could come to understand that "*A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.*" (Proverbs 12:3)

Like Isaiah, James also left us an admonition regarding those whom the Lord receives, when he said,

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter change into mourning and your joy into dejection. Be humbled before the Lord, and He will exalt you. (James 4:6b-10 EMTV)

Are we willing to be humbled and contrite [crushed] before the Lord so that He can make us pure by His Grace? Do we really desire to keep those "spots and wrinkles" that would prevent us from going to be with our Bridegroom Jesus?

Isaiah prophesied these words that reveal the *place* we need to be if we want to belong to the Lord. This is what he said:

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the **meek**; he has sent me to bind up the **brokenhearted**, to proclaim liberty to the **captives**, and the opening of the prison to **them that are bound**; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the

day of vengeance of our God; to comfort **all that mourn**; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. (Isaiah 61:1-3)

The School of Suffering

There is a lot to be said for the "furnace of affliction." This past several months I have been struggling with some serious health issues. The damage to my body from the Septic Shock I experienced in 2003 seems to be worsening. Once again, as in 1990, I have been house-bound more and more. In reality, although I dislike feeling so ill, my spiritual ears are more attuned to the Lord's voice and I love that! Allow me to share some thoughts along this line from a man of God who lived from 1840 to 1912.

The school of suffering

([J. R. Miller](#), "Ministry of Comfort" 1898)

"Before I was *afflicted* I went astray--but now I keep Your word." Psalm 119:67

Most of us need *the chastening of affliction*. Pain is wonderful revealer. It teaches us many things we never could have known, if we had not been called to endure it. It opens windows through which we see, as we never saw before--the beautiful things of God's love.

Many of the finest things in character are the *fruits of pain*. Many a Christian *enters* trial--cold, worldly, unspiritual--and *emerges* from the experience a little later, with spirit softened, mellowed, and spiritually enriched.

Sanctified afflictions soften the harshness and sharpness of one's character. They consume the *dross of selfishness* and *worldliness*. They humble pride. They temper carnal ambitions. They quell fierce passions. They show to us the evil of our own heart, revealing our weaknesses, faults, and blemishes--and making us aware of our spiritual danger. They discipline the wayward spirit.

Sorrow draws its *sharp ploughshare* through the heart, cutting deep and long furrows--and the heavenly Sower follows with the seeds of godly virtues. Then by and by, *fruits of righteousness* spring up.

Sorrow has a *tenderizing* influence. It makes us gentle and kindly toward each other. In no other school, do our hearts learn the lessons of patience, tolerance, and forbearance so quickly--as in the school of suffering.

"It was good for me to be *afflicted*--so that I could learn Your statutes."
Psalm 119:71

Fear of the Lord

How grieved our Lord must be over the blasphemous "preaching" that abounds today! With fearless pride these self-appointed apostles and prophets spew out ear-tickling drivel to the applauding, deluded seekers who desire a "spiritual buzz." Where is the fear of God? Where is the humility that God requires of His ministers who speak His Word? Wisdom tells us, "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." (Proverbs 14:27) Rather than speaking Life, most of today's "ministers" are merely laying "snares of death" for the hearers.

The knowledge of good and evil brought upon mankind his condition of flesh. And now, in these last days, that condition of flesh is more prominent than ever. Man "needs" to have tangible evidence of current happenings, and things to come, in order to believe. His carnal knowledge overrules any spiritual knowledge the Spirit may be trying to impart. If he can't see something, feel something or have some physical manifestation of the unseen, he continues looking. He is ripe for deception.

There is so much talk about the "mark of the beast" and every other end-time phenomenon to which countless people have lent their imaginations. It is mind-boggling the numbers of versions we have of how "the end" will play out. Each one is convinced he or she has the corner on truth. Although the books of Daniel and Revelation are full of symbolism, the "experts" spin their magnificent accounts of the meaning of every word. Some say that Daniel's "sealed up" vision which was to be kept "until the time of the end" has now been revealed. If that were the case, why would there be so many versions? God is not the author of confusion, so who really is the "author" of this massive confusion? I have my suspicions--how about you?

The one major thing at the center of it all is the question of "how will we avoid taking the mark of the beast?" There is also great fear of "persecution" and even death. The persecution will be experienced only by true believers in Jesus. And the persecutors will be those who claim to know the Lord but do not. It will be a terrible, and we already see it happening in some places. What a horrible, sickening sight, to see "Christians" using Scriptures to attack others who truly walk with Jesus! But Jesus gives us hope, as well as a stern warning in these words:

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both the soul and the body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

The book of Daniel tells of the three Hebrew boys who were thrown into the fiery furnace which was heated to seven times its usual temperature. The heat was so intense it killed those whose task it was to throw them into the furnace. King Nebuchadnezzar, who had ordered the boys killed in that way, said these words:

Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. (Daniel 3:25)

We also know of Daniel's steadfast faith in God and how he was spared death when thrown into a den of lions. Why? "*Because he believed in his God.*" (Daniel 6:23)

It is my belief that these accounts in the book of Daniel were recorded along with the rest of the book to give us a clue as to what we might expect in the days ahead. In the 11th chapter, we read the words, ". . . the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." (Daniel 11:32b) I am fully convinced that our God will do wondrous things on behalf of His own, and we will see amazing displays of His power. Some may be translated from one place to another, or kept from harm when going through fire, or even have bullets fail to penetrate their bodies. This could be the final opportunities for some of the lost to come to faith in Christ. Yes, we know from the book of Revelation that many will die, but I have such a deep sense that God will not be standing back with His arms folded. After all, He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9 EMTV)

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. (Revelation 12:11)

Where are Your Roots?

When the winds of adversity blow, where are you rooted? Have the "winds" made you stronger? When the "rains" do not come and you became "thirsty," do your roots "reach" for the Water of Life to satisfy that thirst? Have you become "rooted and founded" in the Giver of Life? Has His Grace brought "unseen" growth so that His Fruit can be seen as testament to where you are "rooted and founded?" Always remember to

. . . be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (2 Peter 3:14b)