

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.” Revelation 2:8-11

What we Feel vs. What we are Promised

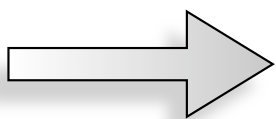
If we base our understanding of God's character and purposes on what we feel we will conclude that God is either sadistically cruel or at best aloof to what is going on. This is living by sight. God calls us to live by the faith that He Himself gives us through His Word (See Romans 10:17). When we live by faith, we ‘see’ God at work in the midst of circumstances that seem to indicate that God is not present.

The Reality Promised in the Spirit:

- “I know you are suffering”
- “I know the future and you can trust me”
- “You are rich”
- “I will test you”
- “To those who are faithful, I give the crown of life”
- “Those who conquer will not be hurt by the second death”

The reality we feel in our flesh:

- Tribulation
- Poverty
- Slander
- Suffering
- Torment from Satan



Knowledge of God based on those feelings:

- “God has abandoned me”
- “God is tormenting me and does not love me”
- “God is unable to do anything for me”
- “Satan has more power than God”
- “I have done something wrong”
- “I am a helpless victim”

“So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for **we walk by faith, not by sight.**” 2 Corinthians 5:6-7

“Therefore **let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator** while doing good.” 1 Peter 4:19

“We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? **But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.**” Romans 8:23-25

Walking by Faith; Entrusting Ourselves to Him Who is Faithful and Mighty to Save Those Who Call Upon Him (*Knowledge of God based on His Word and not my flesh/feelings*)

God's love for us in Jesus Christ will not agree with our flesh. Our flesh longs for comfort and pleasure. When we want God to love us according to our flesh, we will reject the love that He is giving us since His love for us is to unite us to His Son, Jesus. In this life, that means joining Jesus in His sufferings as this is the means by which our faith is preserved until we receive our inheritance in eternity.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who **by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” 1 Peter 1:3-9

Paul prays in Ephesians 3:18 and 19 that we would **“have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,** that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Isn't it odd that we would need strength to understand God's love for us? I believe that it seems odd because we have been wrongly taught that receiving God's love is like getting a chocolate ice cream cone. Strength from God is required to understand His love because His love is unappealing to our flesh.

“He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” Isaiah 53:2-3

Jesus assured all who would follow Him the same rejection and hatred from the world that He Himself encountered while on earth. He calls us to take up our cross and follow Him because it is foundational in his salvation plan for us and not just a necessary inconvenience to be avoided. We will receive this as a gift from God when we stop obeying our feelings and begin hearing and doing (trusting) the words of Jesus.

Do you believe that it is better to suffer with our Lord than to live in comfort apart from Him?

Walking by Faith; Entrusting Ourselves to Him Who is Faithful and Mighty to Save Those Who Call Upon Him

What can we conclude of God by looking at His Word?

“For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

“God, in His love and mercy, calls me to suffer with Christ - and this for my benefit”

“But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba! Father! The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.** For I consider that **the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us...** And we know that **for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who can be against us?** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered’. No, **in all these things** we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:10-18, 28-39

“I trust God in suffering because He has destined me for these things”

“Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even **if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy,** always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For **it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered** once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.” 1 Peter 3:13-18

“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him **but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.**” Philippians 1:29-30

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, **which is why I suffer as I do.** But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that **he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.**” 2 Timothy 1:8-12

“We sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, that no one be moved by these afflictions. For **you yourselves know that we are destined for this.** For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.” 1 Thessalonians 3:2-4

“Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for **whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.**” 1 Peter 4:1-2

“For **God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation** through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.” 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

Walking by Faith; Entrusting Ourselves to Him Who is Faithful and Mighty to Save Those Who Call Upon Him

What can we conclude of God by looking at His Word?

“Jesus also suffered in His flesh and is my example”

“For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For **to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.**” 1 Peter 2:20-21

“For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.” Hebrews 2:10

“For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” Hebrews 2:18

“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, **he learned obedience through what he suffered.** And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.” Hebrews 5:7-9

“From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you. But he turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. Then Jesus told his disciples, **If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.** For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?” Matthew 16:21-26

“Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For **even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**” Mark 10:44-45

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and **let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.**” Hebrews 12:1-3

“I rejoice in my sufferings because God is strengthening my faith and preserving me for eternity”

“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known.” Colossians 1:24-25

“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Romans 5:3-5

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that **the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing...** Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” James 1:2-4, 12

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who **by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**” 1 Peter 1:3-9

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But **rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.** If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.” 1 Peter 4:12-16

“When they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.**” Acts 5:40-41

Walking by Faith; Entrusting Ourselves to Him Who is Faithful and Mighty to Save Those Who Call Upon Him

What can we conclude of God by looking at His Word?

“God is disciplining me in His love so that I might bear fruit and share in His holiness”

“For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. **But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.**” 2 Corinthians 1:5-10

“In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.’ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons... **He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later **it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.** Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.” Hebrews 12:4-7, 10-13

“We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. **This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering.**” 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5

“The suffering that Jesus calls me to endure in this life is temporary and incomparable to the glory of eternity”

“And **after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.** To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 5:10-11

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven,** for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:10-12

“I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. **For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him,** not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and **may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,** that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” Philippians 3:8-11

“You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted... But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. **The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.** To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” 2 Timothy 3:10-12; 4:17-18

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Romans 8:18

“**Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.** For he says, ‘In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: **by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.**”

2 Corinthians 6:1-10