

The Potter and The Clay

by LaBreeska Hemphill

If we as Christians could view our suffering as being able to feel the potter's fingers around our clay, shaping our vessels into one of honor, bending our will and surrendering to His will, then we could better stand the test.

"O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as the potter? Saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand..." (Jeremiah 18:6).

On the Damascus Road Paul received one of the greatest calls a man could receive. It was a call to glory. He was chosen to preach Christ to the Gentiles, to kings, and rulers, and even to Caesar's household.

This was a call to be one of the greatest apostles, and to write more of the New Testament than any other. His testimony at the end of his life was:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness..." (II Timothy 4:7-8).

What a testimony! What glory! But this marvelous call to glory was also a call to **suffering**. Jesus said of Paul:

"...he is a chosen vessel unto me...I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16).

Paul's suffering began immediately following his Damascus Road experience. God took a marred vessel, *Saul of Tarsus*, put him upon the potter's wheel and reshaped him into *Paul* the great apostle. After that, Paul's message everywhere he went was, *"...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22)*. This message of Paul's is an unpopular one that you seldom hear today. But suffering serves a purpose and ministers that do not include this message to their people do them a disservice.

When we are called of God there is much reshaping that takes place. The potter's wheel isn't a real comfortable place to be but it is necessary. That's where we learn to become pliable in His hands. We learn endurance and patience as He molds us into soldiers of the cross. God is gathering His army. Paul understood that when he said to Timothy:

"...endure hardness as a good soldier" (II Timothy 2:3).

He is preparing us for a journey. Boot-camp is grueling but that's where we learn enemy strategy so that we can win the battle and conquer the foe. The very thing that tries and tests us could be preparing us for our station in battle. It could be our boot-camp. Take courage! We must learn how to combat the enemy so that we can help lead God's army to victory!

It's a good thing that God doesn't only see us as we are, but like Paul, God sees us the way we'll be when He gets through with us. In the meantime we can take comfort in his Holy Spirit and His word.

There are certain Scriptures that I've drawn strength from through the years and have highlighted in my Bible. Sometime back I grouped a few of these verses together and typed them out for my own comfort. They are not in sequence. I just wrote them down at random but they are strong and very encouraging. I decided since they blessed me and have seen me through some difficult times they would do the same for you. I start this collage of Scriptures off with my very favorite, so please read and be blessed!

"Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to test you, as though some strange thing has happened to you, but rejoice that you may be partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy" (I Peter 4:12-13).

"For if we suffer as Christians we have no need to be ashamed but we can glorify God and commit the keeping of our souls to him, our faithful Creator" (I Peter 4:16-19).

"It is better, if it be God's will, that we suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit. Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judges righteously" (I Peter 3:17-18; 2:23).

"For it became him, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of our salvation perfect thru sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10).

"Though he were a Son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8-9).

"For though he was crucified thru weakness, yet he lives by the power of God" (II Corinthians 13:4).

And he said to me, "my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me". "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (II Corinthians 12:9-10).

"For the God of all grace who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after we have suffered a while, make us perfect, establish, strengthen, settle us" (I Peter 5:10).

"Humble yourselves, therefore; under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, casting your care upon him for he careth for you" (I Peter 5:6, 7).

"Beloved, build up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20).

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into various trials, knowing this, that the testing of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4).

"For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Romans 8:24-25).

"Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, that he is very pitiful and of tender mercy" (James 5:10, 11).

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father, the Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. If so be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:15-17).

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular, and whether one member suffer all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26, 27).

"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John 4:7).

"Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envies not; love vauntheth not itself and is not puffed up" (1 Corinthians 13:4).

"Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind, for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God" (1 Peter 4:1, 2).

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us" (1 Timothy 2:12).

"Finally brethren, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11).

"For a day in His courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly (Psalm 84:10-11). For the Lord is our defense, and the Holy One of Israel is our King" (Psalm 89:18).

There is not a better way to end this writing than with the profound words of *Isaac Watts and William Blake* in this cherished old hymn.

*Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb
And shall I fear to own his cause, or blush to speak his name*

*Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease
While others fought to win the prize, and sailed through bloody seas?*

*And when the battle's over we shall wear a crown!
Yes, we shall wear a crown!
Yes, we shall wear a crown!
And when the battle's over we shall wear a crown!
In the New Jerusalem.*