



Functions of the Word of God

November 18th, 2020

To Give the Believers Endurance and Encouragement

Romans 15:4 — For the things that were written previously were written for our instruction, in order that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Revelation 3:10 — Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.

The teachings of the Bible can give us endurance, encouragement, and hope (Rom. 15:4). Many Christians have fallen into tribulation and sickness. Being unable to bear it, they feel sorrowful and hopeless, but when they read a portion or a sentence of the Bible, they have the enduring strength in their hearts, or they receive unspeakable comfort, and thus obtain hope that is beyond their expectation.

[In Revelation 3:10] this is the third promise, but its blessing is in no way less than the other promises. It refers again to the rapture. "Because you have kept the word of My endurance." The word of endurance here means two things: (1) the word of Christ's long endurance in waiting for His own glorification, and (2) the word of the Christian's endurance in waiting for His coming. The two Epistles to the Thessalonians particularly cover the matter of the Lord's coming. We see the word "endurance" used in two ways in these two books. The "endurance of Christ" in 2 Thessalonians 3:5 refers to the first meaning as mentioned earlier. In the present age of grace,

Christ is waiting with endurance for the day for Him to receive the power. The "endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 refers to the second meaning. It is what the Christians hold in hoping for the Lord Jesus' return.

Formerly the Lord only said, "You...have kept My word" (Rev. 3:8), but now He elaborates to say, "You have kept the word of My endurance." It is not an ordinary word, but the word of endurance. It is not an ordinary kind of endurance, but an endurance that has to do with the word of Christ. The Father had said to the Son: "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psa. 110:1). For this reason He said, "But concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. 24:36). At present He is taking the attitude of waiting for the Father's work. If He is willing to do something, surely He can lay hold of the iron scepter and crush all opposition. However, He is waiting for God to fulfill His plan for His people. The Lord

Jesus is waiting in order that more grace can be dispensed to the world and that more souls can be gained for Him. Christ's endurance and His power stand on equal ground. He wants to rule, yet His days of ruling have not yet come. He is willing to wait. The words "the word of My endurance" speak of Christ's rejection in this age. From the day of His ascension to the time He will appear again is the period of Christ's endurance.

Because Christ endures in this way, there is a "word of endurance" for the saints to keep. He is now waiting for His kingdom; He is also calling His believers to wait and to endure with Him. While the world rejects His rightful authority, He is waiting for another day when He will assume His position. For this reason, His saints should join with Him in His rejection on earth. Since He has been despised and rejected by man, we should not seek to reign among men! We should disassociate ourselves from the politics of the world and should wait exclusively for the Lord who will replace the present world government with His own power and kingdom. We should submit ourselves to the God-appointed authorities. However, we must not seek to reign in the place where Christ is rejected. Neither can we help Christianity secure honor in this world. We are the dust-ridden companions of Christ and should only hope to bear His reproach in this present age. The position that Christians take today must be the same position that Christ took when He was on earth. If we go beyond this, it means that there are different natures between Christ and the Christians. If we do not understand this, we will inevitably be anxious in the present sinful and confused age. Since we know that our Lord is enduring all kinds of incessant opposition, why do we worry about it? This kind of thought is the most noble thought for our spiritual life, for it joins us to a deeper union with Christ and a more intimate fellowship with Him. How wonderful it is to think that we are standing on the same ground as He is! How our heart rejoices!

Christ promises His believers that they would share with Him in His future glory. Yet to share

with Him in one position means that we share with Him in all positions. If we are joined to His power, we must also be joined to the word of His endurance. Those who will be glorified with Him must first suffer shame with Him. We cannot hope to have one without having the other. Even if we put the motive of being glorified aside, is it not unfaithfulness if we shrink from suffering shame for Him in the world? Alas, Christians have tried too much to save their faces! Why is there the need for so much self-respect? How should our heart feel when we consider the smiting of His face and the spitting at His cheek? May we send out more welcoming invitations for shame and ridicule!

Although we do not gain any sympathy from the world or the nominal church, does not the word "I have loved you" satisfy our heart? If the love of Christ is the guide to our walk, surely we would be willing to stand on the ground that Christ is on. Is there any lover who does not want to be where his loved one is? If we cherish Christ in our heart, we will keep the word of His endurance, because this is where He is at present. Now is the time of trial, separation, cleansing, and sifting. For this reason we should wait. His attitude must be our attitude. Since He is waiting, we should also be waiting. Since we are already satisfied with His present love, we should therefore wait to acquire with Him, rather than gain anything ahead of Him. Where there is love, there is the sharing of things between the ones loved. If the love of Christ has not satisfied our hearts, of course, we will seek for man's honor apart from Him. But who can say if this is now the case?

This union with Christ is the proper position of the church. The Lord does not want to see us falling from this position. May He cause us always to realize that we are forever joined to Him this way. Otherwise, His heart will not be happy, and our heart will not be satisfied.

References: *(Lesson Book, Level 6: The Bible—The Word of God)*, *(Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The Set 1) Vol. 05: The Christian (3), Chapter 3, Section 15)*