



CHAPTER 19: Tribulation

My DEAR COMRADES,

Tribulation is the lot of all men. Suffering, in one form or another, is the inheritance of every son and daughter of Adam. It is a ceaseless source of wonder to me, as I travel up and down the world, to find, how invariably every individual I come in contact with seems to have a bitter of some kind or other in his cup: and it is further cause for wonder, to mark the variety of the trials, and sorrows, and cares that come alike to one and all.

I have noticed, also, that there is no exception to this rule, in the case of those who choose the present world as their portion. They will tell you, that they prefer the certainties they can see and feel and handle, to the uncertainties that are only apprehended by faith; or, as a secularist leader used to put it, they would rather have "the bird in the hand than the bird in the bush." But this preference for the things which are temporal, and which pass away, to the things which are eternal, does not, even when it is realised to the full, in the least degree deliver those who express it from the Tribulations, either present or future, which are inseparable from human life – these are ever with them, and will be to the end.

Nor does the lot of God's own people ensure any departure from the same rule. "In the world," said Jesus to His chosen disciples, "ye shall have Tribulation." The choice of Christ, as their Lord and Sovereign, and the consecration of all they possess to His Service, will not save them from the sorrows that are common to all who live beneath the sun. On the contrary, it may bring them many additional trials.

That this should be the case, ought not to surprise you, my Comrades, cause you to question the overruling wisdom of Providence, or make you doubt the love of God for you. Tribulation has been the portion of God's choicest Saints from the beginning. Read the history of Abel and Noah, of Lot and Abraham, of Joseph and Moses, and the whole host of Prophets and heroes who followed them, as set forth in the Bible. Take the brief summary given of their history in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to



the Hebrews. Let me quote a few of its thrilling sentences:

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

"Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.

"Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

"Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

"And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

"They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

"(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and Caves of the earth."

Then, what a record of similar conflicts and triumphs we have, in the early history of the people of Christ! What crucifixions, and burnings, and drownings; what tearings to pieces by wild beasts; what imprisonments and slaveries; what unheard-of tortures and starvations! What waves of sorrow and suffering have been endured for Christ's sake, for the truth's sake, for the sake of souls, and for the sake of a good conscience, by the followers of Jesus Christ all the way down the ages to the present day! You cannot, therefore, be surprised, or complain, if you also should be called to endure Tribulation for Him who, for our sakes, was the greatest sufferer of all.

Jesus Christ said to His disciples, and through them He says to you, "In the world ye



shall have Tribulation," "If they have persecuted, Me, they will also persecute you;" while Paul assures us that "all Who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." When you are a sufferer, when your burden of care and trouble increases, think upon the following:

1. God has promised to support you in your trials while you walk In the light; that is, while you do His blessed will. Some of the most beautiful and precious passages to be found in the Bible, describe the consolations which He promises to His Soldiers, while they are battling with the difficulties, persecutions, and sufferings of life. Let me name one or two.

He promises you His support. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

He promises you the comfort of His Presence. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

He promises you victory. "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us,"

2. Tribulations are intended for your profit. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Rightly accepted, they will promote your Holiness and usefulness, and help you to understand and struggle for the welfare, of those around you. Paul says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." What is more, they strengthen faith, and help the formation of that character which God desires His children to possess, And then, at the end, they add lustre to the glory of that bright inheritance, where it can truthfully be said of those who have fought their way through, "These are they which came out of great Tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in" the blood of the Lamb."