

Rev. 1:9-11. the Voice From Patmos to the Churches

by Horatius Bonar

John identifies himself as a brother and partner in the tribulation and kingdom, and calls the Churches to patient endurance until the kingdom comes.

Scripture: Revelation 1:9

Topics: "Unity in Christ", "Patient Endurance"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the profound connection between John and the churches, portraying him as a brother and partner in tribulation, the kingdom, and patient endurance in Christ. He highlights the shared experiences of suffering and hope among believers, reminding them of their unity in faith and the promise of the coming kingdom. Bonar encourages the churches to remain steadfast in their trials, drawing strength from their spiritual union and the assurance of Christ's presence. He concludes with a call to comfort one another with the hope of Christ's return and the glory that awaits them.

Transcript

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."
--Revelation 1:9-11.

The voice of the Master ceases, and that of the disciple begins again. He does not call himself 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' as he does elsewhere, but simply 'John'. And as another apostle writes, 'I Paul,' so he does here, 'I John,'--that is, 'I who am that very John whom you have known; who have been among you and cared for you as an apostle and shepherd--I now write to you.' He calls himself the following names--

I. BROTHER and PARTNER. He does not write as a lord over them, or as Diotrephes, wishing to have preeminence, but as one of themselves. He is one of the many 'brethren' in Asia; one of the 'household of faith,' a son of the same father; a member of the one family. He is no stranger or exotic or distant relative, no master or ruler, but truly a part of themselves, who needed their sympathy and love even more than they needed his. Not a brother only, but a partner with them in all things; a sharer with them in the same

faith and hope, the same sorrow and joy. 'Brother and partner!' how comfortably must these words have sounded in their ears! How well fitted to remove suspicion or resistance in regard to the reproofs and warnings about to be conveyed! Such a one was not likely to speak unkindly, or rebuke without a cause; or expose faults with any feeling but that of affection and earnest longing for their welfare. Not to wound, but to soothe and bless, would be his motive and desire.

II. Brother and partner in TRIBULATION. There was tribulation in the Churches then, as now; in some cases it was 'much tribulation' (Acts 14:22), or 'great tribulation' (Revelation 2:22, 7:14). 'Weeping endured for a night' (Psalm 30:5); for this is the night, and it is the time of tears. The Church, the injured widow, waters her couch with her tears, and will do so until the morning dawns, and the day of the wiping away of all tears arrives. What John suffered, these Churches suffered; what they suffered, he suffered--for the sympathy between all the members of the body was quick and instantaneous in these days of love. They felt for each other; they bore each other's burdens; they shared each other's griefs and joys. John could say with Paul, 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?' (2 Corinthians 11:29).

The 'communion of saints' was understood then more fully than ever since. For sympathy between the members of Christ's body is little known in these last days; so many things have come between; so many non-conducting materials have prevented the communication. The world has come in; false brethren have come in; the members do not realize the vitality of their connection with the Head. Life has gone out; love has sunk low; and thus the thrill of sympathy which once went through the body when one suffered is no longer felt. The links are broken; the fine nerves that carried the spiritual feeling through every part have frozen or become insensible, if not dead. Who of us appreciates this deep, true spiritual union, with which no external unity can intermeddle, either to hinder or to help? It is the union of life and love; of faith, and truth, and hope. It is a unity of joy and peace; a unity to which nothing earthly can be compared; a unity altogether heavenly and divine.

III. Brother and partner in the KINGDOM. The kingdom belongs alike to all the members of the one body from the beginning; and the apostle, in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, gives us a few of the names of these 'joint-heirs,' these co-partners in the coming glory. It is an inheritance in light, and each has the whole of it, as each dweller on the earth has the whole sun as his. A common faith, and a common hope, a common exile--and a common kingdom! One in sorrow, one in joy; one in shame, one in glory; one in tribulation, one in triumph! It is a kingdom that is before his eyes, and before theirs; a kingdom which had not yet come; the kingdom of the saints; the everlasting kingdom, the kingdom which cannot be moved. 'Kings and priests unto God' is the common name of all the saints, from Abel downward. 'We shall reign on the earth,' is their unceasing song, even in heaven. Even in exile, and persecution, and sorrow, they anticipate their crowns. From desolate Patmos, the eye of John beholds the glory in which all this shame and banishment are to end.

IV. Brother and partner in the PATIENT ENDURANCE of Jesus Christ. Until that kingdom comes, there is need of patient endurance, such as all the saints have shown in the days of their pilgrimage; the patience exhibited by the Master Himself; the patience of faith and hope; the patient waiting for the kingdom. Truly they 'have need of patience'. Often is 'the patience of the saints' dwelt upon. 'He who endures to the end,' says the Lord Himself; and again, 'In your patience possess you your souls.' Take also the following passages--'Tribulation works patience' (Romans 5:3); 'with patience we wait for it' (Romans 8:25); 'the God of patience' (Romans 15:5); 'patient in tribulation' (Romans 12:12); 'if we suffer (literally, if we are patient), we shall also reign with Him' (2 Timothy 2:12); 'let us run with patience' (Hebrews 12:18). The Churches of Asia, and the whole Church of God, are called upon to this patient waiting for the kingdom,

and yet to be 'looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Lord. Be patient under wrong, and suffering, and weariness, and hope deferred! Fret not! He who believes does not make haste; the Lord is at hand; the kingdom is about to come; the tribulation will soon cease; the joy will soon begin; and once begun, it will never end. The 'everlasting joy upon our heads' will compensate for the ages of patience through which the Church has had to pass on her way to the kingdom.

All this John knew from present experience. He was in the isle that is called Patmos, a banished, lonely man; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. It was for the Master's sake that he was in exile. Faithful to 'the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ,' he was made to know what great things he must suffer for his beloved Lord. He was now the last of the apostles, as his brother James had been the first to go, and he could not but feel his loneliness in his extreme old age.

But he is not alone, for the Father is with him, and the Master too. 'I was' (was 'made to be,' or 'became,') 'in the Spirit on the Lord's day.' One Lord's day he was in the Spirit--not exactly at first, like Paul, caught up to the third heaven (though afterwards he was summoned up, ch. 4:1), but still so 'filled with the Spirit,' so 'in the Spirit', that the invisible things of God were revealed to him. In 'the visions of God' he saw what was coming on the earth. 'The secret of the Lord was with him.' The kingdom and the glory, for which he was suffering banishment, came up before his view.

Thus God sustains His own. He comes to them in exile, and compasses them about with songs of deliverance. He opens heaven and descends to keep them company in their solitude, making them forget their sorrow and their exile!

Let us live near Him; walking with Him in simple faith; tasting His love; and enjoying His sympathy. He is with His own here, and His own people will, before long, be with Him where He is. 'Lo, I am with you,' is His promise to us now; 'so shall they ever be with the Lord,' is the consummation of that promise in the coming day.

'Therefore comfort one another with these words.' For the time is short. The Lord is at hand. The glory will soon be dawning. Earth's thrones will soon be emptied of all unfaithful kings, and the true Monarch of the world will take to Himself His great power and reign.

He hears what mortal ears could not take in--'a great voice,' as of a 'trumpet'. That voice is his Lord's. It repeats the words already spoken concerning Himself, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last,' that John might be reminded of the glory of the speaker. And then it is added, 'What you see, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia.' Thus the things that are seen are for these seven Churches, as well as the things that are heard. This whole book of the Revelation was not only for the Church of these last days, but for the Church of the first age as well. The Lord speaks to the whole Church, and summons it to hear. These seven representative Churches get the message first, and from them it goes forth to all. Jesus is speaking still. 'The great voice as of a trumpet' has sounded through the ages, and it is sounding still; nor will it cease until He whose voice it is has arrived to introduce the consummation and the glory for which we are waiting.

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