ENDURING COMFORT by Andy Diestelkamp

Comfort and convenience are very much esteemed by all of us. We gravitate toward that which is easier just as water takes the path of least resistance. However, we also know intellectually that what is comfortable for us is not *always* good for us.

 From the shoes we wear to our favorite chair to the postures we prefer when sitting, standing, or sleeping, comfortable does not necessarily equal healthy. Indeed, what we find comfortable in the moment might actually end up being the cause of great discomfort in the long run.

 We do the same with food. We may eat our favorite foods in unhealthy quantities simply because they make us feel good for the few seconds they are on our tongues. Such “comfort foods” eaten without self-control can result in great discomfort.

 We spend great amounts of money to make ourselves comfortable without considering the danger that can come with making our comfort such a high priority in our lives. To some, discomfort is an “evil” to be avoided. Thus, personal discomfort may be avoided more than actual evil is avoided. Comfort can become our god; and if it does, we will be completely unprepared to endure the long-term discomforts which often come as a result of our pursuit of short-term comforts.

 Conversely, bodily exercise may make us uncomfortable in the moment but will make us healthier and stronger in the long run. If we know this to be true physically, then consider the potential benefits of spiritual exercise. “Exercise yourself to godliness“ was Paul’s admonition to Timothy, and it applies to us as well, “For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:7,8).

 Most who are taking the time to read this article are doing so in a comfortable environment. However, those of you who have read to this point in the article have probably also been tempted to *stop* reading because of the discomfort it has caused (or might yet cause in application). Good for you for being willing to endure some minor discomfort that comes with having your lifestyle, faith, or worldview challenged. I hope you have the patience to finish.

 There is much that is uncomfortable when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ. After all, its foundation was laid in His humbly “coming in the likeness of men” and being “obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:7,8). “Christ crucified” is the gospel we preach (1 Cor. 2:2). Crucifixion is not comfortable to contemplate, let alone endure. But this is what God did to rescue us from our sins. Indeed, the tortuous horror of the cross exemplifies just how bad our sins are while Jesus’ willingness to endure it demonstrates just how much He loves His creation (e.g. Hebrews 2:9-18). Indeed, it is the cross which challenges those of us who identify with Him to likewise endure (cf. Hebrews 12:1-11; 1 Peter 2:20-24).

 The initial spread of the gospel was not a comfortable undertaking. It was in the context of increasing persecution that the gospel “went everywhere” (Acts 8:1-4) and “turned the world upside down” (17:5,6). However, in modern contexts, “turn[ing] the world upside down” with the practical application of the gospel of Jesus Christ is often avoided precisely because it is uncomfortable.

 It has been my privilege to go to Sierra Leone (West Africa) to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to a population living in abject poverty. Why go to Africa? It is certainly not because it is a comfortable place to be. It is because three weeks in that uncomfortable environment yields more contacts for the pure gospel than does three years in Pontiac, Illinois. And before you think too highly of those of us who “sacrifice” three weeks to go there, consider those who have *moved* there—not for the sake of comfort—but for the sake of the gospel and the souls it can save.

 But aren’t the souls in America as valuable as those in Africa? Certainly! However, could it be that because we, as a culture, are so comfortable and so busy pursuing and preserving our comforts, freedoms, and ways of life that we have neglected and rejected *the* Way of life which offers the greatest of liberties and comforts? Could it be that we and our churches reflect our culture of comfort more than we do the crucified Christ? We are not called to be spiritual couch potatoes (spectators on padded seats in climate-controlled environments). We are called to exercise ourselves to godliness because this is what is truly profitable now and for eternity. “This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance. In fact this is why we work hard and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of believers” (1 Tim. 4:9,10 NET).

 May any discomfort caused by this article motivate us to pursue the eternal over the temporal, to pursue God and His will over our fleeting interests and pleasures. Consider this article to be just a little exercise unto godliness. Thanks for enduring this to the end.

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