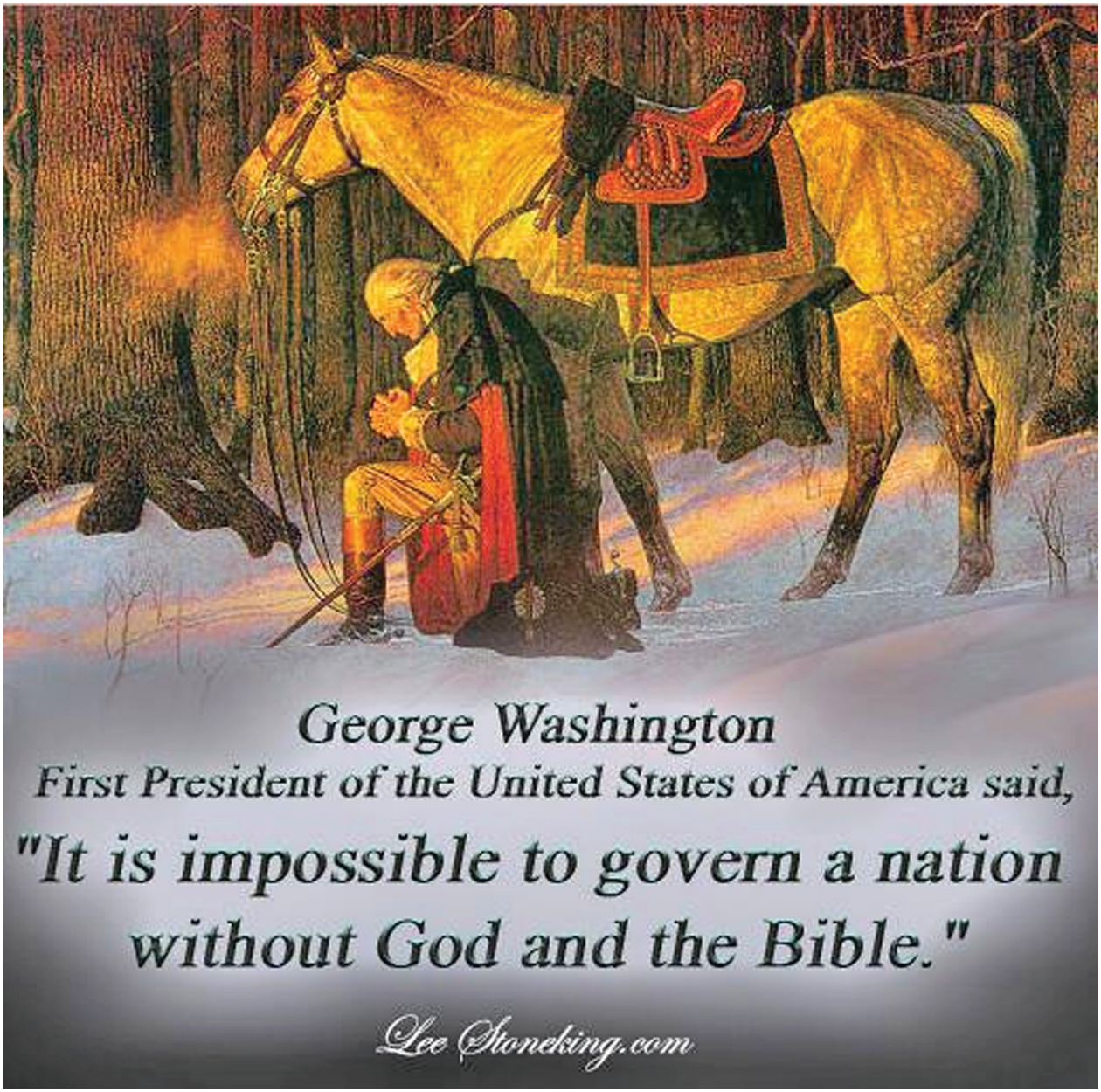
George Washington
First President of the United States of America said,
"It is impossible to govern a nation without God and the Bible."
Lee Stoneking.com

The Fellowship of His Sufferings

by Bro. Clay Gill
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Jesus suffered greatly while He was here on this earth. When I think of Him suffering, my mind typically turns to His sufferings on the cross at Calvary. His sufferings through the trial, conviction, and crucifixion are a focal point of the scriptures because these sufferings were purposeful! Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ willfully chose to endure those sufferings that you and I would have eternal life. What a glorious sacrifice that Christ has offered His own body to God as payment for our sins. However, for the sake of this article, I want to take an additional look at the sufferings of Christ.

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord"
(I Corinthians 1:9).

We are called into fellowship with Jesus Christ. Fellowship is a close communion between two or more people. For example, the brethren within a church can have close fellowship with one another. A husband and wife have intimate fellowship with one another. Jesus and the Father maintain fellowship with one another. Jesus describes their fellowship as being "one!" Just as there are degrees and differences in the fellowship we can have with each other, likewise, there are different degrees of fellowship we can have with Jesus. We are called into fellowship with Jesus.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;" (Philippians 3:10).

Christ suffered on the cross at Calvary by the will of the Father, but he also suffered throughout His life that you and I might have fellowship with Him. Suffering on the cross was ordained for Christ so that we would be forgiven of our sins and live with Him forever in the eternal heaven. However, we as God's children are not called to suffer on the cross as Christ did. When Christ suffered on the cross, His suffering and sacrifice was sufficient. Therefore, we must look at the other sufferings of Christ in order to gain understanding of how we can come to know him through the "fellowship of His sufferings."

Let's examine the sufferings of Christ that we might have fellowship with Christ by following His example:

- Christ suffered by sacrificing His place in glory – II Corinthians 8:9
- He chose a birth that demonstrated humility and poverty – Luke 2:1-20
- He had no place to lay His head and call home – Luke 9:58
- His own chosen people rejected Him – John 1:11
- Those closest to Him did not believe Him – John 12:37
- Some of His disciples stopped following Him – John 6:66
- People tried to twist His words to trap Him – Mark 12:13-15
- He was accused of having a devil – Matthew 12:24
- He was persecuted and laughed at – Luke 8:53
- His own closest friends abandoned him – Mark 14:50
- He suffered sorrowfully – Luke 22:44
- He was proven innocent, but sentenced to death – Matthew 27:15-26

These are only a few examples of the sufferings Jesus experienced! I challenge you to read the scriptures and see more ways that He suffered.

These examples of suffering were given as an example of how we too might suffer. When we experience these things in our lives, we come to know Jesus through the "fellowship of His sufferings." When we, as God's people, suffer persecution because we take a stand for biblical truth, then we "walk in fellowship with Jesus." When we lose friends because they do not like Christ's teachings, we "walk in fellowship with Him." When we choose humility and meekness rather than receive the glory ourselves, then the world will diagnose you and say you have a low self-esteem. In reality, you are "walking in fellowship with Jesus." When you and I as children of God are willing to suffer by standing for truth, not compromising the truth, proclaiming the truth, and continuing to speak the truth in the face of persecution, then and only then will we come to know "the fellowship of His sufferings."

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified" (1 Peter 4:12-14).

It is my prayer that we all might be partakers of Christ's sufferings, so that on our part He is glorified.

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