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Phases of Rebellion

“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ” (Philippians 3:7 NASB).

Many times old habits, struggles, or challenges revisit our lives. Maybe we get angry, struggle with an old temptation, or fall into immature behavior. Why are we struggling?

Do you know we are the “*children of God*” (John 1:12), and that children go through rebellious phases as they mature? There is little difference between the rebellion of a 2 year-old and a teenager. While the teenager has matured greatly, his rebellion is the same: “I want my way!”, “I resent your authority over me!”, “give me what I want!”

When we were immature Believers, we did not really understand discipleship, because we had not yet experienced any cost. When suffering, persecution, or difficulty came, we may have cried out, “Why, God? I don’t deserve this!” After maturing, we may come to a similar place where we are “tired” of the cost and want a taste of our own will. Perhaps we ask, “haven’t I suffered enough? I have lived my whole life for You, God! I deserve rewards!”

We all have expectations of what “normal” life is, and many of us see it as a basic right. Who shouldn’t be able to live their dream, get married, have children, have a good job, and enjoy the pleasures God has given us? Paul, however, explained to the Philippians that he had “*suffered the loss of all things*” (Phil. 3:8b) because of Jesus—he lost his connection to his people, he lost his security, his inheritance, he lost out experiencing marriage and fatherhood, he lost his dignity, he lost his health, etc. After a while, you would think Paul was tired of “losing” the things that many of us claim as “rights,” or maybe he could have felt like he deserved better after “paying

so much” in his walk with Christ. Yet, he counted everything he had lost (and was yet to lose) “*but rubbish*” (Phil. 3:8b), if he gained Jesus! You see, Paul was imitating Jesus, “*who loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God*” (Eph. 5:2b), Who “*although He existed in the form of God...emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant...He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*” (Phil. 2:6-8). Jesus had true rights—equality with God, and yet He gave EVERYTHING for the Father’s will and suffered more than anyone has suffered, just so enemies of God could be reconciled to Him!

As children, we often resist the Holy Spirit’s work to dissolve our so-called “rights,” as He strips away our fleshly desires, earthly hopes, dreams, and confidence and pride in our own selves, that we would become more like Jesus, and destroy (not entertain) “*arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ*” (2 Cor. 10:5 ESV).

Too often, we throw tantrums or pout when our Father’s way is not what we think we want. It is not in our fleshly nature to surrender what we feel we deserve. Like a child who has a fit because his father won’t buy him an ice cream cone (not realizing that his father is raising him for responsibility and honor in adulthood), we too can become frustrated or resentful when God doesn’t give us what we think we want or feel we deserve in this life. Yet He is preparing for us an “*eternal weight of glory, far beyond any comparison*” (2 Cor. 4:17) in Jesus Christ! We have gained Him as our Beloved! May we say with Paul, “*For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day*” (2 Tim. 1:12). Even so, Amen.

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