

"The Believer's Suffering"

Part 8

1 Peter 3:13-5:14

Introduction: In the US, the thought of suffering for the cause of Jesus Christ is completely unacceptable. Many have come to believe that as believers we should never face suffering and when they start to feel the pressures of suffering several thoughts enter their minds. Some begin to question the love of God. Some will look at those who are suffering a claim that they have unconfessed sin in their lives. Still others declare that it is a sign that Jesus is coming back very soon because He would never allow His church to suffer.

I want to take a moment and answer each of these.

1. The Love of God.

No where in the Bible do we read that because God loves us, we will never suffer for Him.

Revelation 2:8-11

⁸ *And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;*

⁹ *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*

¹⁰ *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: **be thou faithful unto death**, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

¹¹ *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*

Jesus does not say, "Fear none of those things **because I will keep you from suffering.**" No matter the suffering they were to be faithful unto death and this is the church! These people make up the bride of Jesus Christ. Let me show you an interesting verse about the love of God.

John 17:20-23

²⁰ *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

²² And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

²³ I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

2. Suffering and unconfessed sin.

Not all suffering is the result of personal sin in the life of the believer. All suffering IS the result of sin because there was no suffering in the world before sin entered. But not all suffering means that someone has personal sin in their lives. Some of the most obedient believers ever have suffered.

Job 1:1

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

1 Peter 3:18

¹⁸ For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

Acts 5:40-41

⁴⁰ And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

⁴¹ And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

Hebrews 11:24-25

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

²⁵ Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

These are just a few examples of righteous people who suffered.

3. Suffering as a sign of Jesus' return.

The Bible does not say that when suffering comes to the US then know that is a sign that the Lord's return is nigh.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

² *For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*

³ *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*

Some people will point to Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:6-12

⁶ *And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

⁷ *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.*

⁸ *All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

⁹ *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.*

¹⁰ *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*

¹¹ *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.*

¹² *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*

These are signs that will come to pass in the Tribulation not in the Church Age. This now brings us to our text for tonight.

"Don't Be Surprised"

Notice 1 Peter 4:12

There is much in this verse for us to see. First of all the "fiery trial" could very well have been the persecution by which the believers were crucified and set on fire to light the Imperial Garden. Next, we can see that the trials were to "TRY" the believers. This tells us the trials of fire were permitted by God. Someone has said, "**A faith that is not tested is a faith that cannot be trusted.**"

God always tests and proves the faith of His children because there are great benefits in the trials of our faith.

James 1:1-8

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

² *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;*

³ *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*

⁴ *But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

⁵ *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

⁶ *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

⁷ *For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

⁸ *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

Trials build the endurance in a believer when they are allowed to do their work. Each trial is to equip us more and more so that we will not be found spiritually deficient. In the trials God is there to grant the wisdom that is needed and so we are exhorted to seek His wisdom which He gives to all men, but we are to ask in faith not doubting.

Notice 1 Peter 4:12 again.

The words "THINK IT NOT STRANGE" are actually a command. The word "NOT" tells us these believers whom Peter was writing to were terribly surprised by the suffering they were encountering. Peter is telling to "STOP BEING CAUGHT OFF GUARD" or "STOP

BEING SURPRISED." Peter wanted them to be ready mentally for the trials because Peter knew that what you believe determines how you behave. When we do not understand that trials are part of the believer's life then we begin to think things like, "Why is this happening to me?" "I do not deserve to go through this trial!" We are programmed to think that suffering is a strange thing in the life of the believer because we are not mentally and spiritually prepared to face the suffering.

So, we must be prepared and that takes mental and spiritual preparations. We must understand several points:

a. We live in a world that is under the curse.

Genesis 3:17-19

17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

b. The world will hate true followers of Jesus Christ.

John 15:18-20

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

We are not of this world and when we stand for Jesus, we must expect that we will be hated and persecuted. The key to being prepared is spiritual growth which comes as we feed upon the Word of God.

Notice 1 Peter 4:13

When the believer suffers under persecution, we are then partakers of the sufferings of Jesus. Now, it is important to see that Peter tells his readers they are to rejoice instead of thinking something strange has happened. I point this out because we see the growth in Peter here.

Mark 8:29-33

²⁹ *And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.*

³⁰ *And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.*

³¹ *And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.*

³² *And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.*

³³ *But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.*

Here in this text Peter did not understand the suffering which Jesus spoke of but when we get to 1 Peter 4, he now understands that suffering is to be expected and it is a good thing for the believer to encounter. Peter now thinks it strange if there would be no suffering.

I point this out because this is the spiritual growth in Peter that had brought him this far. This is why spiritual growth is so important in the life of the believer.

Conclusion:

Let us remember that when Jesus suffered there were many benefits.

Hebrews 2:9-10

⁹ *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

¹⁰ *For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

Jesus because PERFECT IN EXPERIENCE through suffering. Now He can completely identify with all we go through.

In our lives there are many benefits to suffering. Keep in mind God never wastes one experience in our lives.

Notice 1 Peter 4:13 again.

When Jesus returns, we will rejoice with exceeding joy. Why?

Romans 8:17-18

¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

¹⁸ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

The sufferings here will become glory there. F. B. Meyer tells us we are not alone in suffering.

"He shares everything with us now--our pain, our griefs, our weariness. "In all our affliction He is afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saves us." As another has put it: "Not standing over against me, holding back a hand that might help, but side by side; nay, even, 'closer than breathing.' Within the inmost hiding-place of my sufferings, He suffers also, bears my griefs and carries my sorrows, as though they were His own. If only we will avail ourselves of His sympathy and help, they who watch us shall see One like unto the Son of Man walking in the fiery furnace, by our side."