

**"The Believer's Suffering"**

**Part 9**

**1 Peter 3:13-5:14**

**Introduction:** Last week in our study of this book of suffering we looked at only two verses.

**Notice 1 Peter 4:12**

This is the first verse that we gave our attention to. In this verse Peter gives a command to his readers to "THINK IT NOT STRANGE" concerning the suffering which they were facing. In this verse we see that Peter had come a long way from Jesus' announcement about His suffering.

**Mark 8:31-33**

<sup>31</sup> *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.*

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

<sup>33</sup> *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 Mark Peter rejected the thought that Jesus would suffer and die. But when we come to his letter and specifically to 1 Peter 4:12 Peter now understands that it would be strange if a believer did not suffer. In verse 12 Peter is correcting the thinking of his readers. They were as he was earlier. They were shocked and surprised that they had to suffer. This is the very same reaction of many of God's people today where they are faced with suffering. We are shocked and surprised, and we can sometimes question the love and the goodness of God when we face suffering. I am reminded of the words of McGee:

*"I think we need to face up to the fact that there is no shortcut to living the Christian life. There is no easy way. Let me repeat, the Christian life is a banquet—because He has invited us to the table of salvation—but it is not a picnic. We are to suffer for Him and with Him."*

**Notice 1 Peter 4:13**

This is the second verse that we gave our attention to last week. Here Peter sets forth a contrast. Instead of being surprised he commands his readers to rejoice because in their suffering they are sharing in Christ's sufferings. Last week I reminded you that when Jesus suffered there were benefits.

**Hebrews 2:9-10**

<sup>9</sup> *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.*

<sup>10</sup> *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 suffering made Him perfect. Now He was born perfect because He was God, but the perfection spoken of here is the perfection of experience. Because of the great suffering our Lord went through He can now identify with us in our suffering.

**Isaiah 53:4-5**

<sup>4</sup> *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

<sup>5</sup> *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

In verse 4 Isaiah tells us what was happening on the cross when Jesus was crucified. He took upon Himself all the physical and the mental effects of sin so that He can now perfectly identify with us when we suffer.

**Hebrews 4:14-16**

<sup>14</sup> *Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*

<sup>15</sup> *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

<sup>16</sup> *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

This then raises a question concerning suffering, "What are the benefits of suffering for the believer today?" Allow me to ask another question, "Why does God permit His children to suffer?" I want to consider the answers to these questions this evening.

**1. Suffering is for our perfection.**

**Romans 8:28-29, 37-39**

*<sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

*<sup>29</sup> For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

*<sup>37</sup> Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

*<sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

*<sup>39</sup> Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

ALL THINGS in verse 28 would certainly include suffering and so suffering would be a process through which our Heavenly Father conforms us into the image of Jesus Christ. Our Father loves us and because He uses ALL THINGS to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ, we are therefore conquerors over whatever we face. In verse 29 the phrase "PREDESTINATE TO BE CONFORMED" helps me to understand that this is something that God determined is going to happen it will not be stopped. Therefore, if suffering is one of the means by which God conforms me to the image of Jesus Christ, then I am to accept it as His plan and will. There is another way to see this through Peter's words.

**1 Peter 2:5-7**

*<sup>5</sup> Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>6</sup> Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*

*<sup>7</sup> Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,*

Jesus Christ is the Chief Corner Stone of the church, and we are living stones which make up the rest of the structure. One day the church will be complete but today it is still a work in progress. This will be a "TEMPLE" in which God will dwell.

Now let me take you back to the Old Testament and the building of Solomon's temple.

**1 Kings 5:3-5, 15-18**

<sup>3</sup> *Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the LORD his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet.*

<sup>4</sup> *But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent.*

<sup>5</sup> *And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name.*

<sup>15</sup> *And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains;*

<sup>16</sup> *Beside the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work.*

<sup>17</sup> *And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.*

<sup>18</sup> *And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stonesquarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.*

Solomon had 80,000 stone cutters in the mountains. The stones they cut for the temple had to be precise and perfect. They were great and costly stones and so the stone cutters worked hours upon hours to get the stones cut to perfection. They would have been numbered, then hauled in and placed in the exact place which they were cut for.

**Application:**

We too are stones. We are living stones and we are far more costly than the mountain stones that were used to build Solomon's temple. Our value is seen in the price that was paid to redeem us. The price was the precious blood of Jesus Christ. He gave His life so that we could be saved and have a part in the church.

Now since we are living stones, we can be sure, just as in Solomon's day, there are stone cutters that God has to chip away the imperfections. Every person here has a quarry in which God has assigned you and, in that quarry, there are stone cutters whom God is using to chip away at our flaws.

Let me show you another point.

**1 Kings 6:7**

<sup>7</sup> *And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.*

There was no hammer, axe or chisel heard while the building was being put together. The stones were all cut and polished to their perfect size in the quarry. This is a picture of how we are being cut to perfect today. When the church is complete, and all the stones are cut it will be put together in the presence of God. So all the cutting goes on today. We are living in the stone quarries of this world. What do the stone cutters consist of? It can be a person or a group of people whom you work with that are set against you for some reason. They are to be seen as God's stone cutters whom He is using in your life. It can be a family member; it can just be certain challenges at work or at home which God uses as stone cutters. It can be a sickness that you struggle with and cannot escape it. Even illness is one of the stone cutters which God uses to chip away at our imperfections. It can be an accident in which we are involved. It can be a loved one that we must care for. All of these are stone cutters in the hands of the Great Architect.

Let us remember that Romans 8:28 tells us it is ALL THINGS which God uses.

**2. Suffering is for the comfort of others.**

**1 Corinthians 1:3-7**

<sup>3</sup> *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;*

<sup>4</sup> *Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

<sup>5</sup> *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*

<sup>6</sup> *And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*

<sup>7</sup> *And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.*

The idea that Paul has as he writes these verses is that when other believers seen him suffer, they watched very closely as to how he would respond. When he strengthened himself in the Lord and came back with a positive attitude it was a great encouragement to those who were watching him. This was encouraging to them because it meant that they too could face the suffering because God would also sustain them.

**Application:**

When we go through the stone quarries of life, and we suffer there we must understand that people are watching us. If I chose to grumble and complain and constantly question God, I am not helping others to be prepared for suffering. Let me show you how this works.

**Philippians 1:12-14**

<sup>12</sup> *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;*

<sup>13</sup> *So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;*

<sup>14</sup> *And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

Here we see how Paul positive response lit a fire in the hearts of others as he faced the suffering with hope.

**Conclusion:**

Now that we can see these two purposes of suffering let us learn to submit to God's stone cutters.

**James 1:2-4**

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

<sup>3</sup> *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*

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

