

Sunday, November 6, 2022

STUDIES IN 1 PETER (26)

Suffering as a Christian

1 Peter 4:12-19

As we continue our study of 1 Peter, we are continually reminded of how we are to conduct ourselves in a world that stands contrary to the gospel of Jesus. Peter has addressed the difficulties that could accompany the Christian life and the disposition and conduct we need as we live in this world. We are reminded that we are pilgrims here and that we represent our heavenly Father and our Lord. At times this will mean that we will stand out and be peculiar. More than once, we have been reminded that we might have to suffer for the cause of Christ. Our text this evening visits that subject again, this time even more direct than before.

I. Expectant Suffering (12-14)

- a. **Do not think it strange** – see 1 Peter 4:4 – this description noted how others “think it strange” that you do not conform to their way of life (anymore). Here, WE should not “think it strange”, i.e. be surprised, when “fiery trials” come our way.
- b. **The fiery trial which is to try you** – we have noted suffering previously in this letter – 1 Peter 1:6-7 – which speaks of being tested with fire, 3:13-17, etc. Here, suffering is described more intensely. *Fiery trials* indicates severe suffering. Let us be reminded of some of the NT warnings about this:
 - i. Jesus warned of such – Matthew 5:11-12, John 15:18-20 – if they persecuted Me...; etc.
 - ii. Paul endured great sufferings – 2 Corinthians 11:22-28, Philippians 3:8, etc.
 - iii. 1 John 3:13 – Do not marvel, my brethren if the world hates you.
 - iv. 2 Timothy 3:12 – all who desire to live godly will suffer persecutions.
 - v. WHEN we live as we ought to, if we are truly committed, we will likely face rejection and perhaps even persecutions for His sake.
- c. **“As though some strange thing happened to you”** – in this expression, we are reminded to prepare for the possibility of this. Lord willing, we will not face severe persecutions, but we should live as if they are going to happen.
- d. **But rejoice to the extent that you partake in Christ’s sufferings.**
 - i. There is something to be said about knowing that what you are doing is for Christ, and a reminder of what He went through for us. Remember 1 Peter 2:21-24, 3:18, OR read any gospel account of His arrest, trial and execution.
 - ii. Others rejoiced in their suffering – Acts 5:41, 16:25, Matthew 5:12 – just like the prophets before; 2 Corinthians 1:5-7, Philippians 3:10-11 – Paul spoke of “the fellowship of His sufferings.”
 - iii. Let it be understood, this is not a mandate to go out and intentionally look for trouble because of your faith. There is no passage that tells you, you have to be persecuted. The above passages say you WILL be, but that is different. Live your life for God and PREPARE for it when it does come. I believe Peter deals with indirectly in coming verses.
- e. **That when He is glorified, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.**
 - i. Matthew 5:12 – Rejoice and be exceedingly glad – great is your reward in heaven (see also Luke 6:22-23).
 - ii. When we suffer for doing good, God and our Lord are glorified. All that we do is for His glory. 1 Petr 4:11 – in all things God may be glorified, Matthew 5:16 – example brings glory to God. These verses are not specifically identified with suffering, but they do indicate all things are to the glory of God -
 - iii. When He is glorified, we can anticipate that one day He will glorify us.

1. 1 Peter 1:6-7 – when you are tested and overcome, you may be found to praise, glory and honor when He returns.
2. Romans 8:16-17 - *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*
3. 2 Corinthians 4:17 – Paul described it as “our light affliction which is but for a moment”.
4. Revelation 2:10- Smyrna was going to face persecutions, BUT... the crown of life.

f. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you

- i. This is the point we have been emphasizing in the previous verses.
- ii. **On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified** – not found in NU, but is included in the KJV, NKJV based on their mss. Again, we have noted this type of language before – the ungodly blaspheme God when they reject Him (cf. 2 Peter 2:2), but when we remain faithful we glorify Him.

II. Suffering as a Christian (15-16)

a. But let not of you suffer as...

- i. Peculiarly, Peter mentions some crimes that likely they were not guilty of – murder and theft. As Christians, these ought to be the furthest thing from their mind. BUT, these are also serious crimes that carry serious punishment. IF you are guilty of such – punishment is deserved – 1 Peter 2:20 speaks of being beaten for your faults. 1 Timothy 1:9-10 notes that law is made for lawbreakers. Romans 13:4 – if you do evil, fear the government, they have God’s full authority and blessing to punish you. 1 Peter 2:14 notes the same thing.
- ii. **An evildoer** – a much too broad descriptor. Anything that is evil – in this text, I believe it is based upon what the law rightly describes as evil behavior. Also, sometimes the consequences of “evil” are not necessarily based on illegal activities, but other consequences – e.g. job losses, rejection, damaged reputation, or other punitive actions. If you sin against God, you are an evil doer and will face His wrath – cf. Romans 2:8-9. 1 Peter 2:12, 3:16 – Peter has addressed being accused of being an evildoer (but you are not),
- iii. **As a busybody** – this one CAN have an effect. As Christians, we are NOT to be busybodies.
 1. A busybody is one who meddles in the affairs of others. The Greek word contains the root from which some Bibles translate the word bishop (an overseer). Here the idea is one who is engaging where he has no business.
 2. 1 Thessalonians 4:11 – we are to lead a quiet life and mind our own business.
 3. 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 – Paul warns of the need to withdraw from those who walk disorderly. Included would be those not working and being busybodies.
 4. No body likes being around one constantly meddling in the affairs of others – whether Christians or not. Consider this in light of an ungodly society. Are we minding our own business and just trying to be what we ought to be – shining as light and being salt? OR are we interfering in the affairs of others? There are some who are determined to cause trouble, “in the name of the Lord” – they are deliberately provocative and give the world PLENTY of excuse to despise Christians. As study of Roman history and Christians notes that they were not despised because of good behavior, but they refused to submit to idols when being FORCED to do that or face consequences. What we see so often today, is bad behavior, “in the name of the Lord” when the best thing to do is be quiet. You are not going to change the wicked by rubbing salt in their wickedness. NOR can you legislate (i.e. force) morality on anyone. As long as you do not have to participate in wickedness, or violate God’s laws (cf. Acts 5:29), we need to strive to live quiet and peaceable

lives. And that does NOT mean you cannot lobby for change or stand for what is right, but DO consider how your actions reflect on the body of Christ as a whole!

b. Yet, if anyone suffers as a Christian

- i. **Christian** is only found 3 times in the NT. Acts 11:26 where in Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians – possibly a divine name; Acts 26:27-28 – where Agrippa tells Paul, you almost persuade me to be a Christian. The third one is our text. AS 1 Peter is written, it is clear that, at least to some degree, this term was accepted by followers of Jesus to distinguish themselves from other religions (including Judaism).
- ii. Again, this is NOT you going out, showing yourself, and deliberately provoking an evil enemy.
- iii. This is suffering “for the cause of Christ”. This is a circumstance where you have to choose between serving God and obeying manmade rules that conflict with God’s will.
- iv. NOTE: We have to make a distinction between suffering BECAUSE you are obeying God and using your faith to promote a martyr complex. For example:
 1. When you are prosecuted for damaging an abortion clinic do NOT say you are suffering for the cause of Christ. You are suffering because of vandalism which is a crime.
 2. When you engage in worldly protests, regardless of the cause, and you face consequences, especially when you get caught up in a wicked and destructive crowd, don’t play the “martyr card” – you made a deliberate choice to be there. YOU NEED TO REPENT!
 3. Such actions do NOT promote the gospel of Christ, but instead make it more difficult for those trying to live peaceable, godly lives (cf. 1 Timothy 2:1-2). And the more wicked a society is, the less helpful such actions are.
 4. NOTE: This is not saying you cannot exercise your legal rights and freedoms. But you DO need to think about what it does for the body of Christ where you live.
- v. **Let him not be ashamed** – if we are suffering because of our faith, do not be shamed. Man may humiliate you, but God will be glorified. Do not let the shaming from the wicked keep you from doing right OR standing up for your godly brothers and sisters. 2 Timothy 1:12, 1:8, Romans 1:16, etc. Again, Acts 5:41.
- vi. **But let him glorify God in this matter** – we have discussed this in this lesson already. In all things may God be glorified. The NASB (NU), “in this name” which is more likely based on mss evidence, but either way – the point is the same. We glorify God by following Him. s

And thus we can see encouragement to remain faithful, even if we face trials and sufferings in this life for His cause. As we have seen in this lesson, if possible, do what you can to avoid facing persecutions, BUT if you have to choose between man and God, even to the point of persecutions – do what is right. Do what God wants you to do. You may suffer in this life, but God will richly reward you in the end. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10. What are you willing to endure for Him? Think about it!