

Suffering According to God's Will

I Peter 4:12-19

Introduction:

- Although we may not like it, as the Christian follows God's will, suffering will be a part of life
- The believer should not be puzzled by it, because the Bible plainly states that it is a necessity.
- Suffering comes in many forms: sickness and physical pain, mental depression and darkness, things breaking and wearing out, lack, loss, dashed hopes and disappointment, slander and other types of mistreatment by people.
- Through it all, we must recognize God's purpose and plan and learn to trust Him.
- On a wall in his bedroom Charles Spurgeon had a plaque with Isaiah 48:10 on it: "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." "It is no mean thing to be chosen of God," he wrote. "We are chosen, not in the palace, but in the furnace. In the furnace, beauty is marred, fashion is destroyed, strength is melted, glory is consumed; yet here eternal love reveals its secrets, and declares its choice."

I. The Certainty of Suffering- v. 12-13

- a. Job 14:1 "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble."
- b. Understand that our time for trials will come- and that's okay! "Think it not strange!"- don't be shocked!
 - i. Endure trials with the right **attitude**
 - ii. Fiery trials- are those calamities that test our character
- c. Instead of thinking of trials (even fiery trials) as strange occurrences, we should see them as ways to partake in Christ's sufferings- being Christlike. And if we partake of His sufferings, we will also partake of His glory and joy.
 - i. Note- Satan tempted Christ to receive glory before suffering- this was not God's will. There are no shortcuts!- Matt 4:8-9

- ii. Interestingly, Peter once told Jesus to avoid the suffering of the cross (Mark 8:31-33). “Once it seemed strange to the Apostle Peter that his Master should think of suffering. Now he thinks it strange that He could have imagined anything else.” (Meyer)
 - iii. Note that the origin of this thinking is Satanic- that we shouldn’t have to endure any suffering
 - iv. Many Christians play the part of Job’s friends and think something must be wrong if one goes through a season of trials
 - d. Actually, Jesus partook in our suffering when he became a man! It is good to share anything with Jesus, even His suffering.
 - e. Our tendency is to embrace the glory and the joy and to avoid any sharing of Jesus’ suffering. Or we morbidly fixate on the suffering and forget that it is just a necessary prelude to the glory and joy.
 - f. Those who have suffered more in Jesus will rejoice more at His coming in glory.
 - g. If suffering was a suitable tool to teach Jesus (Hebrews 5:8), it is a suitable tool to teach His servants.
- II. The Cause of Suffering- v. 14-16
- a. The believer suffers because he is living in a cursed world- Genesis 3:16-19
 - i. Paul describes this present life as “the bondage of corruption,” “groaning,” “travailing,” and “pain.” As a result of the Curse, we have to contend with weeds, pests, rust, breakage, deterioration, weary toil, and pain.
 - ii. Ever heard of Murphy’s Law?- this is a result of a cursed world
 - b. The believer suffers because of sin and God’s chastisement (Hebrews 12:6-11)
 - c. (1Pe 4:14-16) The difference between suffering as a Christian and suffering as an evildoer.
 - i. V. 15- Suffering for sinful choices is to be expected, and is a shame
 - ii. Suffering as a Christian is nothing to be ashamed about

- iii. In 1 Peter 4:16 the idea is that some are suffering because they are identified as “Christians.” This shows that the name had become very widely used, so much so that one could be persecuted for being numbered as a Christian (a derogatory term)
- iv. Acts 5:41, “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”
- v. II Tim 3:12- Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.
- vi. Suffering for the name of Christ is a blessing, because it shows that we really are following Jesus, and that we are identified with Him.
- vii. I Peter 3:14,17- Happy are ye- James says: count it all joy!

III. The Conclusion of Suffering- v. 17-19

- a. God says there is a conclusion- a purpose for our suffering
- b. V. 17- the time- dispensation of the Church Age which began at Pentecost. House of God is the Church- The church is undergoing suffering now as a purging process now
- c. Guzik- Now is our time of fiery trial (1 Peter 4:12); the ungodly will have their fire later. The fire we endure now purifies us; the fire the ungodly will endure will punish them. For the Christian, the issue of punishment was settled once and for all at the cross, now we are being purified. The same fire that consumes straw will purify gold.
- d. Peter’s sobering application is clear. If this is what God’s children experience, what will become of those who have made themselves His enemies?
- e. V. 18- Peter is quoting Proverbs 11:31- It isn’t that the way of salvation is difficult, but the that the demands of discipleship challenge us! Jesus said Take up your cross daily, and follow me!
- f. V. 19- Leave it in a Trust Fund with God. As our Creator, He is sovereign over all and has a plan for our lives. See I Peter 2:25

Conclusion:

- The closing verse here reminds us of the integral role parents play in a child's life. Children don't have to wonder if there is enough food, clothing, shelter provided for them everyday- they simply trust their parents
- So we should be able to trust in our Creator, our loving Heavenly Father
- As the familiar hymn goes:

What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms!
I have peace complete with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms!
Leaning, leaning,
Safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning,
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms!