



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

THE GLORY OF PARTAKING IN CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

1 Peter 4:12-19

Let us begin our study by reading 1 Peter 4:12-19. Is it not surprising that in a passage on trials and suffering we find the words "joy, gladness, rejoice, glory, exceeding joy, happy, glorify God"? God's Word is different from man's words just as God's ways are different from man's ways. It is not natural to rejoice when there is suffering, especially if we are living righteously. Most people count it a strange thing for the righteous to suffer. The text begins by instructing us "not to think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try (test) you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (1 Peter 4:12).

Some Christians have the erroneous idea that once you become a Christian, that will be the end of all forms of suffering. Some ministers and preachers publicise programs and seminars aimed at ending all trials, troubles, problems and difficulties. Many sincere people rush to those meetings and are soon disappointed. Suffering is part of life in the present age. True believers cannot avoid persecution and suffering. "Think it not strange". "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution". "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God". "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" (2 Timothy 3:12; Acts 14:22; 1 John 3:13).

THE PURPOSE OF PARTICIPATION IN CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

1 Peter 4:12,13; 1 Thessalonians 3:3,4; 2 Timothy 3:12; 2 Corinthians 4:16,17; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 5:10; Romans 8:17,18.

"Beloved, think it not strange". Satan often deceives believers that they are no more beloved of God if He allows any form of trial or suffering in their lives. The Beloved Son of God, Jesus, suffered too (1 Peter 1:11; 2:21; 3:18; 4:1; John 15:18). Yet, He remained ever and always the Beloved of the Father. No one, however blessed and privileged in Christ and in ministry should think that persecution will never come to him.

Why does God allow trial, persecution and suffering to come to His children? 'Problems are given to ordinary people to make them extraordinary'. They strengthen our moral character and toughen our spiritual muscles. Suffering can (1) teach us patience with people and situations (Romans 5:3,4), (2) make us to learn obedience (Hebrews 5:8), (3) keep us from pride (Job 33:16,17,19), (4) restore us from wrong, dangerous paths (Psalm 119:67), (5) prepare us to comfort others who suffer (2 Corinthians 1:3,4), (6) prove the depth of our love for God (Deuteronomy 8:2,3), (7) prepare us for greater, better and higher service and ministry (Genesis 45:5,7,8), (8) make us to be partakers of God's holiness (Hebrews 12:10,11; 1 Peter 5:10).

It is the cross that leads to the crown and it is the suffering that leads to glory. Knowing the spiritual value of persecution and suffering, we are to rejoice when we become partakers of Christ's sufferings.

THE PRIVILEGE AND PRESERVATION IN CHRISTIAN SUFFERING

1 Peter 4:14-16,19; 3:14,16; Luke 6:22,23; 2 Corinthians 12:9,10; Hebrews 12:2,3; 2 Timothy 1:12; Psalm 138:8; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

What a privilege to suffer as a Christian and not as a criminal; to be reproached, insulted and mistreated for the name of Christ and not for being a murderer, or a thief or an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters! If we suffer for the name of Christ, for Christ's sake, we are happy and blessed. Those who remain faithful and loyal to God during persecution have special fellowship with the Lord like the three Hebrew children in the furnace of fire. "For the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you". The Spirit of glory is the Spirit of God, the glorious, Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit abides with those who are being persecuted for the cause of Christ; to comfort them, to shed the love of God abroad in their hearts, to give them hope, to give wisdom to answer and relate with their persecutors, to give multiplied grace to endure to the end, to reveal the deep things of God necessary for victory, to assist them in prayer (John 14:26; Romans 5:5; 15:13; Matthew 10:19,20; Luke 21:15; 2 Corinthians 12:9; 1 Corinthians 2:10; Romans 8:26,27).

Those who suffer for righteousness' sake will not be forsaken by God. "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19). There is no danger to the soul that is committed to God, the faithful Creator; so we must continue to do good during the time of suffering and persecution.

THE PERIL AND PUNISHMENT OF CHASTISED SINNERS

1 Peter 4:15,17,18; 2:20; Ezekiel 9:4-6; Matthew 3:9,10; Malachi 3:5; Luke 12:47,48; Hebrews 12:25,26,29; Romans 1:18,32; 2 Peter 3:5-7.

Both Christians and sinners suffer in the world (1 Peter 5:9). It is better to suffer as a Christian than to suffer as a sinner. Murderers, thieves and evildoers suffer the wrath and judgment of God on earth; and, if they are unrepentant, will suffer in hell forever. Religious hypocrites who "obey not the gospel of God" will not go unpunished. Being religious does not protect us from the judgment of God who will not overlook any sin. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:17,18).

Christians who suffer persecution must remain steadfast in righteousness if they are to escape the judgment to come. Sinners who neglect their salvation stand in danger of eternal punishment. It is not enough to belong to a church or be part of the house of God; anyone who hopes to be saved in the end must be in Christ and through God's grace and power, live in holiness. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

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