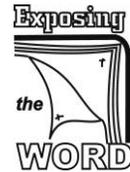


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The Epistles of 1 & 2 Peter

BY DR. EDGAR PIERCE



X- Remember to Suffer Gracefully: 1Pe 4:12-19

As I thought through this section of the epistle of Peter and the title I had given it I had a sense that this is probably one of the least applicable to us today in our American version of church. Let me explain this statement. When we consider the enormous suffering that, the early church endured for the gospel message, we see that we, I think you would agree, do not suffer, not for the same reasons at least. That is why I say it is least applicable. I am not saying it is not but just not as much as the early church because of the level of persecution.

Charles Lowery writes a column in *SBC LIFE Journal of the Southern Baptist Convention*. In the Oct/Nov 09 paper he wrote what I think give us a humorous picture of our great life.

I like the story of the young man who, eager to make it to the top, went to a well-known millionaire businessman and asked him, what the number one reason for his success was. The businessman answered without hesitation, “Hard work.” After a lengthy pause, the young man asked, “What is the SECOND reason?”

Three young boys were bragging about who had the fastest father. The first boy said, “My dad can run a mile in only five minutes.” The second boy countered, “My dad can mow the whole yard in only ten minutes.” The third boy jumped in, “My dad’s the fastest of all. His job ends at 5 p.m. and he’s always home by 3 p.m.”

As we have stated in this series Peter is addressing a group that were in the midst of or facing inevitable severe persecution. He reminded them to suffer gracefully. I know easy said, hard practiced.

If God sends us on stony paths, He will provide us with strong shoes. - Alexander Maclaren

I- Shared Persecution:

The first thing we notice is Peter tells them and us that we are not in this alone. *1Pe 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.*

Phillips NT says, And now dear friends of mine. I beg you not to be unduly alarmed at the fiery ordeals

which come to test your faith, as though this were some abnormal experience.

This suffering was common to all believers in that day. I think of the suffering and I am reminded of the verses that Paul talked about his suffering.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

The early Christian made their mark by being so committed to the message of Christ that they gave their blood, flesh and life before they would turn their back on Christ. They did not suffer alone but it was common to all.

David Guzik, director of Calvary Chapel Bible College Germany, says in his commentary *“Peter once told Jesus to avoid the suffering of the cross (Mar_8:32-33). “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)”*

II- Sharing In Christ Persecution:

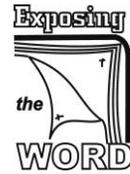
The early disciples were placed in prison. After they were beaten and released notice their testimony.

Acts 5:40-42 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. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

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The opposite effect happened from the desire of the Jewish council.

Peter reminds us that our suffering for the gospel is in effect partaking of the suffering of Christ. **1Pe 4:13** *But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings...*

Again David Guzik says, “We can only **partake** of Jesus’ sufferings because He partook of our humanity and sufferings. He became a man and suffered so that our suffering wouldn’t be meaningless. It is good to share anything with Jesus, even His suffering.”

III- To Glorify Him:

A Christian Martyr is one who: Chooses to suffer death rather than to deny Christ, or His work....Sacrifices something very important to further the Kingdom of God....Endures great suffering for Christian Witness. The Voice of the Martyrs, (Evangelical Press Association; August, 1998), p. 11

I recently read a thought that said the way we can tell if we are true servant is how we act when we are treated as a servant. May I suggest the same is true with suffering? The way that we handle suffering can either bring glory or disgrace to the Lord Jesus.

1Pe 4:13...that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. 16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

When we suffer it is an amazing time that we can be a witness to the grace and glory of God. The world is watching.

IV- Let's Be Honest with Ourselves:

Do you know whom I lie to the most, myself. Yes, myself. Most of us look at self with such a skewed view that we cannot be honest. Peter gives us some words in the next verse that I really don't like, at least the flesh does not. **1Pe 4:17** *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? 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

I think he is speaking to me that I need to examine how I act and endure things in life.

Some believers are very surprised when they are called to suffer. They thought they would do some great thing for God, but all God permits them to do is to suffer. Just suppose you could speak with those who have gone to be with the Lord; everyone has a different story, yet everyone has a tale of suffering. One was persecuted by family and friends...another was inflicted with pain and disease, neglected by the world...another was bereaved of children...another had all these afflictions. But you will notice that though the water was deep, they all have reached the other side. Not one of them blames God for the road He led them; 'Salvation' is their only cry.

Robert Murray McCheyne

This leads us to the final point.

V- Surrender to the Will of God:

Notice the last verse and let me give a quote to close. **1Pe 4:19** *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.*

Oswald Chambers

To choose to suffer means that there is something wrong; to choose God's will even if it means suffering is a very different thing. No healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not. Be merciful to God's reputation. It is easy to blacken God's character because God never answers back, He never vindicates Himself. Beware of the thought that Jesus needed sympathy in His earthly life; He refused sympathy from others because He knew far too wisely that no one on earth understood what He was going through. Notice God's 'waste' of saints, according to the judgment of the world. God plants His saints in some of the most useless places. We say, 'God intends me to be here because I am so useful.' Jesus never estimated His life along the line of the greatest use. God puts His saints where they will glorify Him most, and we are no judges at all of where that is.

So in it all make sure we suffer only for right reasons and make sure we suffer with grace to bring glory to God.