

Our Stewardship of Suffering

1 Peter 4:12-19

PART TWO

Introduction

How to live as a Christian in response to trials, persecution, and suffering.

"You are those who have stayed with me in my trials" (Luke 22:28).

"It was a period of almost uninterrupted trial and suffering" (J.C. Ryle).

Those who *stay with* or abide in Jesus Christ will suffer – as it was with Jesus – by divine appointment.

Four Instructions on how to exercise responsible stewardship of our trials and suffering:

1. *Expectation of Suffering* (v12)
2. *Exultation in Suffering* (vv13-14)
3. *Examination & Exoneration in Suffering* (vv15-18)
4. *Exemplification in Suffering* (v19)

I. Expectation of Suffering (v12):

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."

"No affliction would trouble a child of God if they knew God's reasons for sending it" (G. Campbell Morgan).

"in faithfulness you have afflicted me" (Psalm 119:75).

"test" Gk *peirasmos*; "a trial of one's character."

II. Exultation in Suffering (vv13-14)

"But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (vv13-14).

Jesus suffered for doing right. You will suffer for believing what is right, proclaiming what is right, and doing what is right in His name.

"rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings" (v13).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer defines a Christian as "someone who shares the sufferings of God in the world."

People only despise Christians because they despise Him who is the Christ.

“but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation” (v13; NASU).

Exultation = “A feeling of triumphant elation or jubilation; rejoicing.”

“but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ”

The more you suffer for His sake on earth, the greater your reward in heaven.

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12).

“at the revelation of His glory” (v13; NASU).

“Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30).

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne” (Matthew 25:31).

“you may rejoice with exultation” a stronger word for *rejoice* includes the idea of a rapturous, ecstatic joy!

“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven” (Luke 6:22-23).

“If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (v14).

They hate the *name Jesus Christ* because that is the sum total of all that He is as the Son of God.

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.... ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.... But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me” (John 15:19-21).

“for the name of Christ” indicates an alignment with, and public declaration of allegiance to Jesus as Christ, the Savior and Son of God.

When you are “insulted” mocked, reviled for publicly proclaiming *“the name of Christ, you are blessed.”*

Publicly proclaiming the name *Jesus Christ* will expose you to persecution, in some cases prosecution, in some places execution!

Persecuting Christians is a continuation of the persecution Christ Himself:

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Acts 9:4).

“But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.’ But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles

and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name” (Acts 9:13-16).

“men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 15:26; NASU).

1. Suffering for the name of Christ is a *privilege*.

“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29).

“that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings” (Philippians 3:10).

2. Suffering for the name of Christ is cause for *rejoicing*.

“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (Colossians 1:24).

3. Suffering for the name of Christ means being *counted worthy to suffer*.

“and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” (Acts 5:40-41).

“let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:10-12).

A Fellowship of Suffering: sufferings for Christ is a shared experience in the body of Christ.

“...you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (v14).

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12).

Suffering for Christ draws the *comfort* of Christ – in our hearts and through the body of Christ.

“For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:5-7).

God does not intend for His children to go through suffering in isolation.

“...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt. 28:20).

The world may rejoice at your suffering for righteousness sake now, but your sorrow will one day be turned into an eternal, inexpressible joy!

“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (John 16:20-23).

“and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:17-18).

“Let us brace ourselves then, to suffer whatever may befall, only [concerned] that our sufferings are due, not to our [lack] of Christianity, but to our possession of it; not because of temper, or evil-speaking, or misbehavior, but because we are so like the Master, and so near Him. So like Him that we are mistaken for Him. So near Him that we are bespattered by mud flung at Him” (F.B. Meyer).

“fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).