

Ps 131:1,3
 Ps 119:26,27
 Ps 129:1,2,3,4
 Ps 66:4,5
 Hy 53:1,2,3,4
 1 Peter 4:12-19
 John 15:18-16:4
 1 Peter 4:13a

Yarrow, April 17, 2011

Beloved Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Next week remember suffering of our Lord on Good Friday. We know His suffering was in our place, ie, took God's wrath on Self so that we might go free. So like to think: ought to be no suffering in our lives, ought to be only God's favour. We experience there is suffering, and that puzzles us....

- People to whom Peter writes suffered, ie, endured hardship because of faith. Lest they get discouraged, Peter explains the reason for the suffering. That's our text: these Christians "participate in the sufferings of Christ," and that gives reason to rejoice.

PETER TELLS CHRISTIANS TO REJOICE IN THEIR SUFFERING.

1. The Nature of the Suffering,
2. The Cause of the Suffering,
3. The Response to the Suffering

1. The Nature of the Suffering

People Peter addressing normal. Includes they suffered. How??

- Readers used to be pagans, ie, fully participated in practices of community. Live per 4:3b. ie, following "evil human desires", cf 4:1. So: very loose living, letting passions go, do what feel like. Self-centred.
 - Gospel came to these people, some to faith. ∴ changed. See 1:3: new birth. Result: no longer "evil desires" dictate behaviour (1:14), cf 4:1: "done with sin". Rather, pursuit of holiness (1:15). Cf 4:2
 - Involves self denial. Price worth it, ie living hope of eternal inheritance, cf 1:4. Yet this self denial not easy....
 - This change impacts relations, whether wrt government, employment or marriage.
 - Re government: 2:13ff: instead of thumbing nose at authority, now submit... (vs 13) and respect (vs 17) – though authorities may be corrupt per 4:3.
 - Re employment: 2:18ff: instead of grumbling at master/boss, submit. Do task willingly and well.... So: don't take advantage of boss, don't be lazy, steal from him, etc – though boss corrupt per 4:3.
 - Re marriage: 3:1ff: wives submit to husband – though he may be man of 4:3! Ibid Christian man – respect wife, treat her according to knowledge – though she be corrupt per 4:3.
 - This sort of difference in behaviour prompts reaction from those around you, cf 4:4. ∴ names: you strange, weird, aliens. ∴ speak evil of you, cf 3:16. This obviously hurtful. Discouraging. Call you "aliens and strangers", weirdoes, cf 2:11; 1:1. Treat you that way....

- ∴ temptation great: not be so holy, don't be too different. Ie, get bit sloppy on edges when it comes to application of 2:13ff.... It not easy to be Christians in a broken world.
- We can relate to this temptation.
 - Some of us raised with the faith, and so don't know from experience the unbeliever's lifestyle. It strikes us as fun, for do what feel like. More, don't have to stick out as being different, and being mocked for being so holy....
 - Others of us know unbeliever's lifestyle from inside, including its spiritual vacuum and emptiness. God in mercy delivered us from that, brought us to Self. Somewhere along line we thought: now bad things won't happen to me anymore.... But turns out so differently.... Friends/family of past now shun us, mock us.... Even find within self an ache for some of stuff of past.... We wonder: then what's the sense of becoming a Christian!? Gained nothing except hardship....
- That's the setting of Peter's comment. He wants to encourage these young Christians so that they don't give up in face of suffering, ie, being mocked, ridiculed.... ∴ 4:12-19, and heart of his argument is vs 13: you're suffering, and that's inevitable because share suffering of Christ.

2. The Cause of the Suffering.

Reason for their suffering is (says text) that share Christ's suffering. Is sharing Christ's suffering a strange concept?? (cf vs 12b).

- Yes, it is, *if* you understand the phrase "sharing Christ's suffering" to mean that Christ's suffering wasn't good enough to achieve your salvation, and so you need to suffer as He did to atone for your sins. That sort of a notion is completely unbiblical. Suffering Christ experienced leading up to cross of Calvary, and especially on the cross, atoned for the sins of God's children, so that there is no judgment of God left on my sins.
 - See Peter's own words on the topic: 1:18f: "the precious blood of Christ" "redeemed" you. It didn't do so partially (so that you have to contribute something, perhaps through further suffering), but completely. God Himself was so satisfied with Jesus' work that He "raised Him from the dead and glorified Him" (1:21). Result: His resurrection gives us "new birth" and "a living hope" (1:3). Pt: Jesus' suffering is believers' complete redemption.
- But fact Christ suffered for our salvation does *not* mean Christian won't suffer.
 - Cf 4:12: Peter considers suffering *inevitable* for the Christian. So: don't be surprised/dismayed. Even speaks of *participating* in Christ's suffering.
 - Where Peter get this from?
 - Cf Jesus' words, John 15:18-20; 16:1f,4. Note reason: vs 19: you no longer part of world. You on different wave-length, have different values. Makes sense: they have very small view of reality, ie, don't take living God for real. Ie, they unborn (cf 1 Peter 1:3), still in womb, don't get the big picture of life outside. ∴ they see you as different, and so mistreat you.
 - Peter himself experienced truth of Jesus' words.
 - Cf Acts 4:1ff. Note reason for seizing Peter & John – irrational. If Jesus in fact raised, respect it! How else explain miracle of 3:7f. If not raised, ignore, story will peter out.... Yet 4:16f ∴ 4:18.
 - Cf Acts 5:17f; 5:28. Irrational, cf 5:30ff. ∴ 5:33, 40. Note apostles' reaction: 5:41. Why rejoice? Proves they in step with Christ, and so will inherit what

He inherited. See Mt 5:12 – this the reward Jesus received, cf Acts 2:32f.
 ∴ we have living hope, inheritance, cf 1 Peter 1:3f.

- Now Peter: same is true for saints of dispersion. Not surprising that they rejected by friends, scorned, maligned.... Even if imprisoned or lose job, no surprise.... If belong to Christ, they will treat you as they treated Him. Take encouragement from this reality: it's evidence you belong to Him!
 - Meanwhile: let your suffering be for good reasons, not bad. Vs 15: not as murderer or thief or any kind of criminal. Remember 2:12.
 - Odd one in this list is “meddler”, and Peter emphasizes it. Pt here: as new convert you can see self as responsible for unbelieving spouse/boss so that try to compel them to do right thing. We realize: noble intent.... But Peter: that's meddling. Give everyone their own responsibility, so that no one irritated because you leaning too heavily on them and they in turn persecute you.... Here a wise word: don't get up anyone's nose by overriding their own God-given responsibility for own conduct.
- So: what cause of being scorned, mocked, persecuted – be it in marriage, in employment, in society as whole?
 - Cause is: you belong to Christ. So they do to you what they did to Christ, ie, take out their dislike of Him on you.
 - ∴ last point: how respond to this suffering?

3. The Response to the Suffering

Peter makes point of telling his readers to *rejoice* in face of suffering. We find that odd.... We inclined to give selves to self-pity.... So: why Peter say this?? Couple of reasons, both very encouraging.

- Cf vs 14: if insulted on account of name of Christ you blessed –why?– “because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”
 - Pt here is: it is Christ the world hates. You will feel world's hatred for Christ if/when your conduct reminds them of Jesus Christ. Yet you can't reflect what Christ is like without the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. Ie, your lifestyle and the scorn world gives because of lifestyle *proves Spirit's presence*; He dwells in you, made you His home (cf vs 17: reference to “house of God”). Effects of regeneration evident, not just to self, but to others.
 - So: take encouragement from persecution. You blessed. ∴ reason to rejoice.
- Cf vs 12: reference to ‘painful trial’ – yet Greek has ‘fire’.
 - Term ‘fire’ appears elsewhere in Scripture as indication of God's presence, cf Exodus 3, Exodus 20, Judges 13, Ezekiel 1, Acts 2.
 - Given presence of God's Spirit in Christian, not surprising that ‘fire’ present, be it not in literal flames.
 - Yet ‘fire’ is purifier, cf Prov 27:21; especially Malachi 3:1ff.
 - Pt: regenerated not yet perfect. Yet God has made home in him. ∴ process of making this home increasingly a fitting home for Lord. Ie, Lord would use scorn of spouse, workmates, neighbours to burn impurities out of our lives. See Mal 3:3b: ∴ men who will bring offerings in righteousness.
 - Purifying can be painful process ∴ called ‘suffering’. But it exceptionally rewarding because it prepares us for better service to God.
 - In process it becomes evident, to selves and others, that we indeed genuine, ie, the real stuff – true silver.... This is *testing*, cf 1:7.

- Of course, the closer we are to the person who scorns us (spouse, parent/child, work) the sharper the suffering is – and the more we're refined, purified.... Cause for rejoicing!
- Cf vs 17: if Christian/church can find presence of God painful (for He holy), how will ungodly experience it?? Now they persecute, mock because they think they top. But when see the Lord face to face on day Christ's glory revealed, how they survive His holy anger? Christians already find God's presence painful in certain way, for need to be different ∴ scorned, ie, God's presence overwhelming (cf Exodus 19f). Ungodly undoubtedly perish! This is point of quote in vs 18.
 - Old Testament Scripture so clear on point.... No life for those who deny/ignore Lord. Ie, God will take vengeance on those who hurt His own....
 - How different for believer, cf 1:3f: living hope, inheritance. Ie, suffering will pass. As it did for Christ → received crown of glory.
 - Meanwhile, let Christian commit self to care of faithful Creator..., and meanwhile "do good" (vs 19) in marriage to unbeliever, in work for unbeliever, etc, no matter what kind of person that is and no matter how scornfully treats you....

This week is Good Friday, Easter. Focus on suffering of Christ, and His triumph. You belong to Christ, walk in step with Him. ∴ cheerfully suffer too, at hands of loved ones.... Don't get discouraged, but rejoice – for same crown Christ received is yours also.