

Understanding Suffering #2: “Suffering as a Christian”

In 1 & 2 Peter we discover SEVEN KINDS OF SUFFERING; each kind requires a different response:

- One kind we are to RECEIVE – Christ’s Substitutionary work
- One kind we need to EXPECT – as a Christian
- One kind we should SUBMIT TO – next week???
- One kind we must RESIST – just wait!
- Three kinds we are admonished to AVOID – stay tuned!

DANGER: lumping all suffering into ONE category OR having the wrong response to each can cause negative outcomes

Why does our view of suffering matter?

- The wrong beliefs & responses create bad outcomes
- If you think God is against you THEN who could be for you?
- **Conquerors remain persuaded** *“that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, **nor any other created thing**, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:38-39)

As a Christian we should expect to suffer persecution. First, what is a Christian; WHO qualifies? The Apostle Peter Describes Christians (1 Pet. 1:1-25): “The begotten of God to a living hope through faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who are born again, made holy, by the incorruptible seed of the Word of God” (Also, John 3:3, 7)

Christian Defined: “a follower of Christ [the Anointed One]”. “...*the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch*” (first use Acts 11:26). Some say it was originally meant as an insult: “*little Christ*”

Persecution defined: “to harass or punish in a manner designed to injure, grieve, or afflict specifically: to **cause to suffer because of belief.**”

Jesus told us to EXPECT persecution: “**If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.** If you were of the world, the world would love its

own. Yet, because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' **If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.** If they kept My word, they will keep yours also" (John 15:18-20) Context: "Abide in Me!"

Old Testament Examples recounted in Hebrews 11:35-40: "But others trusted God and were beaten to death...trusting that they would rise to a better life afterwards. Some were laughed at...their backs cut open with whips...chained in dungeons...died by stoning...sawed in two; others were promised freedom if they would renounce their faith...were killed with the sword ...wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in dens and caves...hungry and sick and ill-treated—too good for this world."

New Testament Church Examples of Persecution:

1. Acts 4 Peter & John were arrested for preaching the Gospel
2. Acts 5 Apostles imprisoned [angels freed]; beaten & released
3. Acts 7 Stephen s stoned to death [Saul consents to his death]
4. Acts 8 Saul [Paul] commits Christian families to prison
5. Acts 12 Herod kills James; Peter is imprisoned

Paul also tells us to EXPECT IT: "Yea, and all who will live a godly life in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But continue in the things which you have learned... that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." **(Read 2 Tim. 3:12-17)**

Examples of Paul's Persecution: "From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times...beaten with rods...I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day...in the deep...journeys often, perils of waters... of robbers...of my own countrymen...of the Gentiles...in the city...in the wilderness...in the sea...among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness...in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness..." **(2 Cor. 11:24-27)**

Three Major Qualifiers for Persecution:

1. *“Blessed are those who are **persecuted for righteousness’ sake**” (Matthew 5:10)*
2. *“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you **partake of Christ’s sufferings**, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you” [How are you blessed?] *“for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Pet. 4:12-14a)**
3. Peter continued... *“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone **suffers as a Christian**, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Peter 4:15-16)*

Remember Christ Provided an Example and Model Appropriate Behavior while Suffering Persecution (1 Peter 2:21-23):

- a. Christ suffered for doing good
- b. He didn’t exchange insult for insult
- c. He didn’t return threatening
- d. He committed himself to the righteous Judge

*“**Therefore**, let those who **suffer according to the will of God** commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” (1 Pet. 4:19).*

“Suffering according to the will of God” has two applications:

1. One kind to EXPECT: *“Suffering as a Christian”*
2. One kind to SUBMIT TO: *“to be continued... (listen to & read message #3)”*