“How to Live as Suffering Saints”

1 Peter 4:15-19

If we suffer, it should only be for the right reasons

Peter mentions four examples of sinful behaviors which can result in suffering in one’s life

Murder is an obvious one which brings about significant consequences

Stealing, intentionally make trouble for others, and being a meddlesome nuisance should also never characterize us

To practice such things can and inevitably bring punishment and justifiably so

It is a very poor testimony to shamefully suffer corrective consequences for willful sin

However, there’s no shame for suffering persecution simply because one is a believer and a committed follower of Christ

Rather, it is a great privilege which should prompt praise from our hearts!

We’re called by His name, the greatest name, the name above every other name, the name at which every knee will bow in heaven, the name alone in which eternal salvation is found

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Why does the judgment of God start with the church?

God will judge believers now, sometimes with even severe correction, but unbelievers face His divine judgment throughout eternity

Judgment starts now in this way for a Christian but begins only in earnest for the unbeliever when they die

There’s a connection here to 1 Corinthians 11:27-31

These believers were violating the sacredness of the Lord’s Supper and so God’s judgment came upon them

There’s also another way of understanding this

“Now is our time of fiery trial (1 Peter 4:12); the ungodly will have their fire later. The fire we endure now purifies us; the fire the ungodly will endure will punish them. Yet we always remember that there is never any punishment from God for us in our sufferings, only purification. For the Christian, the issue of punishment was settled once and for all at the cross, where Jesus endured all the punishment the Christian could ever face from God…The same fire that consumes straw will purify gold. The fire is the same, but its purpose in application is different, and its effect is different upon the straw and the gold. Even so, Christians do suffer some of the same things the ungodly do, yet the purpose of God is different and the effect is different.”

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He goes on to write, “Christians can rejoice that the sufferings they face in this life are the worst they will ever face throughout all eternity. We have seen the worst; those who reject Jesus Christ have seen the best of life their eternal existence they will ever see.” (BLB)

A good biblical example which illustrates this takes us back right to the beginning of the Bible

It’s always ultimately better to be an Abel rather than a Cain

Why is this true?

It’s far better to suffer temporarily because one is a believer than to suffer eternally for being an unbeliever

To further substantiate his point, he quotes from Proverbs 11:31: “If the righteous are rewarded here on earth, what will happen to wicked sinners?”

“If the justified sinner is saved only with great difficulty, suffering, pain, and loss – what will be the end of the ungodly?” (The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1948)

Peter is contrasting the temporal with the eternal

We tend to look at suffering primarily in regard to what is momentary rather than through the lens of eternal realities

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Peter concludes this chapter with an encouraging statement, calling every believer to positively submit to God’s sovereignty when encountering suffering

To commit one’s soul is depositing it for safe keeping

Keep living according to what is right

Entrust your life completely to God

Rest in your Creator’s unfailing promises

What?

Christians will inevitably suffer in this life

So What?

It matters how and why we suffer and what kind of response God expects from us

Now What?

How will we take we have listened to in a church sanctuary or on our livestream out into our daily life?

Let’s earnestly pray now for God to transform us so we can more effectively glorify and praise Him and encourage others