

TITLE: THE JOY OF SUFFERING

TEXT: 1 PETER 4:12-19

THESIS: The purpose of this sermon is to help the church be prepared to face suffering joyfully, knowing the reward that's waiting.

INTRO: We're blessed to live in a country that still allows us to worship in peace. However, we all know that this is not a "Christian" nation anymore. What if the day comes that Christianity is forbidden? (This may not be as farfetched as it seems.) What if those caught worshipping are put in prison; homes, families, & jobs taken away? Will be willing to "go underground?"

I. REACTION TO SUFFERING(v. 12-14):

- A. (v. 12) Don't be surprised by the fiery trial. Expect it! The Christian then, and certainly now as well, has no excuse for not knowing and being prepared for persecution.
- B. (v. 13a) But rather rejoice that you are partakers of Christ's sufferings!
 - 1. **Phil 1:29**—"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake"
 - 2. **Heb 12:6** – for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth
 - 3. **Acts 5:41**– after being beaten, the disciples rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.
- C. (v. 13b-14) Why rejoice? Benefits of suffering:
 - 1. *When His glory shall be revealed (2nd coming), you'll be glad w/exceeding joy!* Christ suffered horribly on Earth. But was resurrected and ascended back to Heaven, and is now reigning in His glory (**3:22**). This glory hasn't yet been revealed (physically) to us. But implied here is that, since you shared His suffering in this life, you'll share His glory in eternity (**1 Thess 4** – meet Him in the air)!
 - 2. (v. 14a) *The spirit of glory & of God rests on you.* Recall the image of the HS resting on Jesus (showing God's approval)!
 - 3. (v. 14b) *Christ is glorified because of you!* In a world that's 'speaking evil of' Christ, you're glorifying Him! **& He knows!**
 - a. Christ is glorified by your well doing and your endurance of suffering for Him.
 - b. & Christ is glorified by the simple acknowledgement of those who witness your good behavior & patience (**2:12; 3:16**).
 - c. And happy are ye! Because you **know** you're doing the right thing, and because Christ will reward you for it!

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS IN SUFFERING (v. 15-16):

- A. (v. 15) Don't suffer as a sinner! Murder, thief, evil doer (all-inclusive), busybody in other men's matters!
 - 1. **2:20** – If you suffer for sin, big deal! But if you suffer for well doing, & take it patiently, this is acceptable to God.
 - 2. Busybody [meddler] in other men's matters – many leaders in the Lord's church need to study this verse, because many of them are suffering because they meddled in the affairs of other congregations!
- B. (v. 16) Don't be ashamed to suffer as a Christian, but glorify God.
 - 1. If you're suffering for a sin, you *should* be ashamed of this. You should repent of it, confess it, and be forgiven (**1 Jn 1:9**).
 - 2. But if you are suffering as a Christian (for doing the right thing), **do not be ashamed!** But glorify God!
 - 3. E.g., sometimes I notice that I'm feeling down about something. I'm depressed because of the results of something I did. Sometimes it's because I've done something wrong. But other times it's because of doing something right as a Christian (which had negative results). When I realize this, I think of v. 16 and remind myself that I did the right thing!
 - 4. *God is already being glorified by your good actions, enduring persecution (v. 14). But He won't be if you're ashamed of it! Shame brings about repentance. This is good if you're suffering as an evil doer. But never repent of doing the right thing!

III. RELIANCE ON GOD IN SUFFERING (v. 17-19):

- A. (v. 17) The time of judgment is come (at hand); it begins at the house of God (church - **1 Tim 3:15**).
 - 1. This isn't final judgment; it's the suffering Peter's been talking about. This time is upon his readers.
 - 2. God is bringing it! He's bringing it first on His own house, then on the ungodly.
 - a. Why His own house? Persecution tests/tries/proves His people (v. 12)
James 1:2-3 – trial of your faith worketh patience; **Rom 5:3** – tribulation worketh patience
 - b. What about the ungodly? If God brings judgment on His own people, what will happen to non-believers?
- B. (v. 18) If the righteous are scarcely (with difficulty) saved, then what about the ungodly?
Probably a quote from **Prov 11:31** - "*Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the sinner.*"
 - 1) God brings trial on His people first, testing them (**1:7; 4:12**). 2) Trials will also then come on the ungodly & disobedient.
 - 1. Observe the fall of nations: Rome, e.g., Christians were 1st persecuted; later the nation fell.
 - 2. U.S. (once a Christian nation) – trial is now beginning with us (Christians); trials will then come on the rest of the nation, and it **will** fall if Christianity isn't restored.
- C. (v. 19) SO, if you suffer as Christians (you're going to suffer either way), commit (entrust) your soul to him...**in well doing!**
 - 1. Those who suffer as Christians should trust in our faithful God. How? By continuing in well doing!
 - 2. This kind of commitment doesn't trust in God to keep us *from* suffering (or Peter wouldn't be writing this letter about suffering)! It trusts in God to save us *because of* suffering. This Christian knows he has a home in Heaven waiting! And so he continues in well doing. He continues to live the submissive, committed life Peter is commanding in this letter.
 - 3. Note that those suffering as sinners *should not* pretend to commit their souls to God. They must first *obey* God.

CONCLUSION: The church of the 1st few centuries was persecuted far worse than most of us can even imagine. Yet they grew more than most of us can imagine too. Why was that? Because they were committed! They committed themselves to the faithful Creator, and to *His way, even in the face of torture and death*. Non-Christians could see that there was obviously something to this Christianity, if its adherents would give their lives for it! *Today, what do non-Christians see in *our* Christianity? Not much! Most of today's "adherents" won't give up a Sunday nap to attend worship with NO persecution, much less give up the Superbowl for it! Why would anyone want to be a part of this? Will we be prepared to endure? Will we recognize it as an opportunity to suffer for Christ, knowing that we will also share in His glory?