

Peter has admonished and encouraged believers experiencing suffering while pursuing what might be called normal walk and service for the Lord. We, like they, are in a foreign land, enduring hardship and rigors of the way and the sometimes unfriendly attitudes of the natives dwelling here. Those he was writing to were Jewish refugees or descendants of refugees and suffered simply as such. But now they also suffered unjustly despite their righteous manner of life, and sometimes because of righteousness, for conscience sake. They were serving the Lord while peacefully going about normal Christian life. Just as they, we are aliens and pilgrims passing through on our way to glory. As they, we are not tourists or vacationers nor are we settlers. But we are ambassadors for Christ recruiting others to go to glory with us, 2Corinthians 5:20. Doing this is more likely to excite conflict with the god of this world whose territory we are passing through. We are seeking to free souls now subject to him through their pride, self indulgence and bondage to sin. This increases the probability of suffering for the Christ who has chosen us as followers. Satan hates the Lord Jesus Christ and those who take that Name become targets of both his attacks and subtle wiles. Fiery trials are to be expected. And many are recorded in the Acts and epistles, on down through history and in the news today. Not that we should do things deliberately that simply provoke and antagonize unbelievers but neither should we hesitate to reverence the Name of Christ and proclaim the Good News to all who will listen. Suffering for Christ here is rewarded at the appearing of the Lord of glory to reign.

Matthew 5:11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Acts 5:41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Philippians 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; 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

2Timothy 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him:

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; {temptation: or, trials}

Yet the Spirit through Peter finds it necessary to again remind us not to return to the ways of the flesh and

fall into a pattern of sin no different from those of the world around us. Furthermore the possibility exists, yes the danger exists, that a believer can fall into **heinous acts** that would bring forth punishment by the authorities of the world and bring a terrible smear on the Name of the One who died for those very sins. Note the sins named together here. Murderer, thief, evildoer (criminal), and what? Busy body??? A meddler! How does one suffer being a busybody? By being told to "buzz off"? Losing friends? Yes, but perhaps the apostle has something else in mind. W. E. Vine comments in his "Dictionary of New Testament Words":

BUSYBODY

C-1, Noun, 244, **allotrioepiskopos** - from **allotrios**, "belonging to another person," and **episkopos**, "an overseer," translated "busybody" in the AV of 1 Pet. 4:15, "meddler," RV, was **a legal term for a charge brought against Christians as being hostile to civilized society, their purpose being to make Gentiles conform to Christian standards.** Some explain it as a pryer into others' affairs.

Another translator (TCNT) puts it:

*I need hardly say that no one among you must suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a criminal, or for **interfering in matters which do not concern Christians.*** [Emphasis above are mine.]

The repercussions that might fall upon well meaning Christians who would undertake to attempt to reform the world around them were NOT to be confused with persecution for Christ's name, or even as suffering for righteousness sake. No, we are aliens, pilgrims, ambassadors. Such "meddling" is characterized as sin along with murder, theft and evildoing. The teaching of Kingdom Theology incites just such meddling which only unnecessarily antagonizes lost sinners who need salvation not reformation. Christendom will succeed only in bringing on worthless persecution (and ultimately its own destruction) if it forsakes its pilgrim character and seeks to dominate the world it was sent to evangelize. Not only is the world unchanged but souls that might have heard the gospel and listened are turned off to the gospel and turn against God and His Christ.

So we are again warned that not all suffering glorifies God. If we suffer for wrongdoing we have dishonored God. Note how many times Peter reminds us in this letter of our propensity to revert back to what fleshly men enjoy.

On the other hand Peter strongly encourages those who suffer legitimately for Christ's Name. They are partakers of Christ's sufferings. One with Him, in fellowship with Him, walking in His footsteps,

experiencing the reproach He experienced. No shame in this! We are not a failure if they will not hear the gospel or accept us in their communities. We are not to be surprised by rejection and worse. We are to rejoice in it, and glorify God because of it. He is glorified by the suffering of His own for His name, even though the persecutors speak evil of Him.

Peter connects this persecution with **judgement**. Judgement beginning at the House of God. Persecution has a cleansing effect on the House of God. It weeds out empty profession which tends to infests it otherwise.

Judgement is said to “begin with us” but proceed onward and outward to reach the ungodly and sinners. The “righteous” are those counted righteous by faith in the shed blood of Christ on the cross for them, the **elect** mentioned in Ch 1:2. Even though elect, saving us is “with difficulty.” Not that difficult works or attainments on our part were necessary. Far be the thought. The thought is that the believer’s path toward his salvation from this world is not without difficulties along the way. Once saved the believer has eternal life and cannot perish. He then walks in newness of life on earth until reaching the glory that shines before him. Not that we are in any danger of being lost, losing the salvation freely given on God’s part. That is based upon the finished sin-bearing of Christ on the cross and His shed blood as Peter reminded us early in the epistle. But the way of the Christian is difficult while passing through this scene, fraught with difficulties and trials in a sin-cursed earth and rejection and persecution from a hostile world.

But judgement does indeed characterize the House of God on earth. What is the House of God? Peter doesn’t mention that it is the Assembly, the Church of the living God, but Paul tells us,

1Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth..

But Scripture is clear about the holy character of it and the cleansing judgement He expects in it.

Psalm 93:5 Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

The Lord Himself instituted judgement of His House in Matthew 18:15-21. **Peter** heard this first hand. At the first appearance of sin in the newly formed Assembly, God demonstrates very clearly His thoughts about it. Through **Peter**, He judges the hypocrisy of Annanias and

his wife.

Acts 5:13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

Then Paul instructs the local assembly on this cleansing:

1Corinthians 5:12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

1Corinthians 11:27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. {damnation: or, judgment} 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

The fact that God requires holiness in His House testifies to the coming judgement upon sinners and the whole rebellious world. All are responsible to Him if for no other reason than He is their Creator and they are responsible to Him. Those of His own are kept by Him as their faithful Creator, Creator both of their natural being and the born again person they are now. No undeserved suffering comes upon us that is not permitted by a loving all-powerful God. As Sovereign Creator-God He may for His own good reasons allow occasions of suffering to enter our lives. If we suffer according to His will we are beckoned to let Him enfold our souls in His keeping, devoting ourselves to well doing until He takes us Home. If we suffer for our own faults, even then in His infinite grace, He works all things together for good for the believer.

By Ron Canner, February 16, 2005