



A Time For Suffering ..That's Not Sought After

It is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. —1 Peter 3:17

Are you suffering because you refuse to compromise in a sinful way? If so, you are not alone. But our world today is unfortunately not overrun with Christians like that who are willing to suffer for righteousness sake, or with a lot of example leaders that are willing to sacrifice in order to do the will of God. Keep up the Good Work and go through with grace!

A lot of religious people today do not know that our loving Heavenly Father has no desire for us to seek out pain, to voluntarily bring-on suffering to ourselves in order to try and glorify Him. I'm not looking down on anyone here. I too was once taught by religious leaders that I needed to voluntarily sacrifice during certain seasons of the year (in a way that didn't help anyone) and to bring on my own suffering in order to earn points and to please God, but all this was not done by me in righteousness. It was a waste and I was misinformed. But God *does* want real Christians to endure hardness and suffering as exemplary soldiers in order to do what is right in all circumstances. Paul said, ***“Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are His dear children”*** (Eph. 5:1, nlt).

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps. —1 Pet. 2:21

As Joseph shared the stories of what God taught him in prison, I learned that the justice of God is not hampered by the evil of men. Doing good is still pleasing in His sight—even when we're mistreated by the world for it. —William Crowder

Would you like to be a good example and fish for people today? Do you ever pray about this? Evangelism is to be more an *invitation* than a *confrontation*... from someone seeking to get along with sinners short of blowing it by sinning... yes, from a saint with sterling character who is very winsome and spiritual and charming. For our first love, Jesus Christ is exceedingly charming in the right way and so is our Father! Let me tell you, the Lord is still a blessing to hang out with! The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are still good examples too!

So many think that to be like them—to be good and *“spiritual”*—means you have to be weird and out of touch with people, but that is far from the truth! It really means that you are very practical, down to earth, and in touch without being caught up in this world's evil system.

Our prayer is that God will raise up more exemplary Christians who have Holy-Spirit-backbone so to speak... sanctified committed believers with deep convictions inside, people that care for others and are willing to die for what they believe in according to the Word! We don't need more grumbling; divisive, hypocritical, nepotistic, complaining Christians who are on some power trip, who really don't even have any grounds for what they are whining about. The Church doesn't need more wimpy, bitter, hyper-negative saints with low standards and faulty hearing—ones that get all “gripey” during times of testing like, “Hey dude; don't talk to me right now! I'm going through a trial. My girlfriend has shelved me and she's dating a real Barney. Can you please begin to get a clue and see that I need to take on a blunt for some solace? The Lord has spoken to me 'It's OK. Go for it my child and be at peace.'” That's just wrong.

I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am completing what remains of Christ's sufferings for his body, the Church. —Paul, Col 1:24, nlt

We work hard and suffer much in order that people will believe the truth, for our hope is in the living God. —Paul, 1 Tim. 4:10, nlt

Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. —Paul, 2 Tim. 3:12, nlt

The apostle Pete suffered, but he said, “**Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example**” (1 Pet 5:3, nlt). You see, minister means “servant” and too many ministers today feel that the people are there to be the good examples... that they're there for the purpose of serving them; to suffer and sacrifice for them and to support their ministry (yes to give to them the big bucks), rather than them being there to give to, and to serve the people. It's wrong! Of course there is nothing wrong with giving tithes and offerings to God in a certain ministry as the Spirit leads, but I'm talking about people having an A-list superstar mentality. And that type of attitude is not beyond any of us.

I am here to help you get to where you need to go (and where you deep down want to go). That's good for everyone! I don't want to selfishly view you as one who has the purpose of getting me to where I need to go (or want to go). I am here as a peacemaker to feed others, protect others and serve others. I'm here to please and worship God; to learn to understand His ways and other people better; to help them get saved and see them grow up spiritually. I love that prayer from that 13th-century believer named, Francis of Assisi! Have you read it?

*Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,*

*It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.*

Many different versions of that great prayer exist. So non-narcissistic!—it is in dying to self that we enjoy abundant life in Jesus. Francis knew that we Christians are on this planet to attract people with the Lord's joy, empathy, purity, love and peace—yes, attract them to Christ, rather than repel them away from Christ or His body with some ugly soul demeanor.

God wants you and me to be a blessing for both unbelievers and Christians alike...by His power and wisdom! The apostle James said, ***“Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure”*** (Jam. 5:9-11).

Like Francis, the prophets profited others as well—they hung in there with the Lord and His people no matter what hardship they encountered. They fought on their knees not to harm people, but to benefit people... people worth fighting for. Believing prayer and lots of wise decisions (made by individuals in advance whenever possible) are what it's going to take to see good witnesses raised up to reach the next generation... by people willing to put up with the pains and trials that are normal for the Christian experience... by saints willing to take a stand against the evil and darkness of our day. The Bible commands, ***“Be an example to the believers”*** (1 Tim. 4:12).

Suppose you're talking about the joy of the Lord, yet you're always grouchy and grumpy and snapping at everybody. What you say will be meaningless because of what you are. Those who talk a lot about the Lord but don't live the life succeed only in mocking Christianity. —Chuck Smith

And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good deeds of every kind. —Titus 2:7

*From the example of Jesus who went about doing good...
We are to honor our Savior by helping wherever He would. —Hess*

Sure, at times doing good; doing your “duty” (which is a word we hardly ever hear anymore) brings suffering. That's how it is. The enemy of your soul really does not want you taking a stand against him and his program to kill, steal and destroy people. Ever read *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* by John Foxe? Not only did believers in Old Testament times suffer fierce opposition, those in New Testament times experienced it as well.

Think about how it went for Stephen the shining martyr. And think about Joseph too. His payment for serving his people and for running to avoid the immoral advances of the wife of his boss ...who was hitting on him, was unjust imprisonment. Both were good witnesses for God in spite of it all.

The apostle Peter also understood heartache, being jailed. He knew firsthand what cruel hardship was like, having also been incarcerated for doing what was right. He was a good example to follow and he gave us this clear perspective: ***“It is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil”*** (1 Pet. 3:17).

He showed us that the Gospel is the answer in everything! Yup, for those who are confused, distressed, stressed, depressed or in relational difficulty—it's the answer they need! Paul sang praises to God in the midst of horrible circumstances and everything worked out alright for him. He wasn't worshipping to make it turn out alright, he was simply grateful and delighting himself in the Lord. He was rejoicing always! That's how we are to live.

What we need to be about is doing good... especially in the area of worship and in fishing for the souls of men and for women, and for boys and for girls! We need to listen well and be about our Father's business always; praying for the comfort of those around us who are suffering for whatever reason. Christians can be so myopic at times and inverted in our vision that we totally forget about the Lord and those around us. But God is large and in charge. He expects us to get involved, as we are called to wisely alleviate the suffering of others... not by being shortsighted enablers who are idolatrous, but by doing practical acts of kindness and things that simply make life better for people.

Some TV preachers still say keep it always positive and if you have enough faith and get your confession just right, you will never have to suffer or ever get sick. Man, I hope you don't get sick, but that kind of message is a lot of bunk (which means it's flat out erroneous). Don't get twisted by those twisted popular high profile personalities!

What you *don't* want to do is this... You *do not* want to ever bring suffering into your own life due to your own foolish or hasty choices (or into the experience of others ..especially to those of your family who trust you—those you are trying to win to Jesus Christ). Never harm your loved ones (or anyone) by making lukewarm, carnal fools into your best friends. That's so diculous, it's ridiculous!

The Bible warns us, ***“Whoever walks with the wise will become wise; whoever walks with fools will suffer harm”*** (Prov. 13:20). You want to remember the Lord and wisely pray about your decisions first. You want to listen to Him and to godly council. That would be much better for everyone! You want to do what's right no matter the suffering or cost!