

Women's Bible Study
1Peter 3:17-18, December 7th, 2022
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1Peter was written to the believers scattered throughout Asia Minor to encourage them to continue in the faith even through trials. It was a reminder to act in obedience so that their behavior would honor Christ in holiness. The focus was to be on their future hope rather than their current struggles. The charge was for them to continue to grow in the likeness of God, not fitting into the world, but rather to be a model of excellence. Submission was to be practiced in regards to governing institutions, and also to those in authority. Love for the brethren was emphasized, looking to Christ as the example. Submission in the marriage relationship, specifically wives towards husbands, was commanded. Likewise, a husband was reminded to live with his wife in an understanding manner, regarding her as a fellow heir of God's grace. The importance of living in a manner which blessed others was stressed. Their security was in Christ; therefore, their lives were to reflect Him, even in times of difficulty. Moving on to 1Peter 3:17-18, the writer continues to justify his statements using the perfect example of Christ.

1Peter 3:17-18 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. For Christ also died for sins once for all, [the] just for [the] unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

Christians should expect to suffer for their faith in varying degrees. They may be persecuted, hated, physically harmed, lose their earthly possessions and reputation, and even die. This is perhaps not so apparent today in our immediate culture, however it was true upon the writing of this book of the Bible, and it is still true in some parts of the world. We may experience 'suffering' in relationships, by looking and acting different from the majority. Perhaps others will make fun of us, and disregard our passion for Jesus as silly. Perhaps you will be labeled insensitive or rigid and unaccepting of 'modern' thinking. You may have heard people say Christianity is a crutch, for those who are weak. In the following verses, pay attention not only to the facts of persecution of believers long ago, but also to the response.

Acts 5:41 So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for [His] name.

Matthew 5:12 "Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Romans 5:3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

2Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

Romans 8:17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with [Him] in order that we may also be glorified with [Him.]

Philippians 3:10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

Hebrews 11:24-25 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin;

2Timothy 3:12 And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

1Peter 4:13-16 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if [anyone suffers] as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.

1Peter 3:17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

Notice there are two ways mentioned in which suffering may come upon us – either for doing what is right or for doing what is wrong. First, let's consider suffering because we have done something wrong. It might be difficult to have compassion on someone who is experiencing ill effects because of sin. There are consequences for behaviors which go against authority, both in the world and in the Word. We have a judicial system of punishment for those who commit a crime. God also tells us He will punish sin. We looked at this same concept in 1Peter 2:20, For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer [for it] you patiently endure it, this [finds] favor with God.

“No man can promote his own highest good by doing wrong, and then enduring the penalty which his sin incurs; and no one should do wrong with any expectation that it may be overruled for his own good. If we are to suffer, let it be by the direct hand of God, and not by any fault of our own”, Albert Barnes NT Commentary.

What comes to mind is the thought of something ‘not being fair’. We can think we would respond to ill treatment better if we truly deserved it. Yet, Peter is saying that it is better if we do not deserve it. Consider your testimony – if you suffer because you have done something wrong then you tarnish yourself and what you believe; rather, if you suffer when you have upheld your faith, then there is proof of your testimony.

“Yet we hear persons say, “I would not mind being blamed if I deserved it,” which is very absurd, since it is the deserving of blame which ought to trouble us far more than the rebuke”, Spurgeon Devotional Commentary.

In 1Peter 3:18, Peter confirms the truth of verse 17 with the example of Christ’s suffering. Recall that the audience Peter is writing to are Jews who had been taught that the offering of sacrifices on a regular basis is what cleansed them from sin and made them right with God. Now, Peter is saying Jesus’ death and resurrection has *once for all* paid the price. So instead of offering up animal sacrifices, the requirement is to offer up a life of service and gratitude, including the willingness to suffer for their faith.

1Peter 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, [the] just for [the] unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

Hebrews 9:28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without [reference to] sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

“For” – or because, “it is better” (ref to v. 17); because it is what Christ did.

Consider – Jesus is perfect.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Hebrews 5:9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

2Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin [to be] sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as [we are, yet] without sin.

Hebrews 7:26 For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

1Peter 1:18-19 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, [the blood] of Christ.

Isaiah 53:9 His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

1John 3:5 And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

Yet he was treated unfairly, persecuted, suffered, and died even though he was not guilty. Jesus suffered not for His own sins, but for ours.

For what purpose? – In order that He might bring us to God.

Romans 5:6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Colossians 1:21-22 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, [engaged] in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—

Romans 8:11-13 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Christ, in obedience to His Father, suffered for us though He was without sin.

Are we, who are sinful, willing to suffer for the cause of Christ?

Christ persevered to the end, until His Father's plan had been satisfied.

Are we ready to give up at the least bit of discomfort, or are we standing firm in His strength?

"... the apostle would encourage those whom he addressed to bear with patience the sorrows to which their religion exposed them. He assumes that all suffering for adhering to the gospel is the result of well-doing; and for an encouragement in their trials, he refers them to the example of Christ, the highest instance that ever was, or ever will be, both of well-doing, and of suffering on account of It", Albert Barnes' NT Commentary.

Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Hebrews 2:9 But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, [namely,] Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

Consider – let us never assume that the sufferings of someone are because of their own wrongdoing. Remember Job's friends who accused him of bringing sorrow upon himself because of sin? God had allowed Job's life to be tested and used for His glory. Let us pray for endurance and peace for our family in Christ when they experience difficulty. Let us be mindful to encourage our brothers and sisters in the faith.

Are you able to recognize that the trials which God has allowed in your life have been purposed for His glory? How have you grown through difficulty? Have others witnessed your perseverance in the faith and been encouraged?

Consider – Jesus willingly suffered for us. Do we grumble and complain when life is not easy or takes a turn we don't expect? Do we accept God's perfect direction and will for us with hearts of gratitude for the opportunity to serve Him for His glory?

John 10:17 "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

John 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

1Peter 3:14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, [you are] blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,

1Peter 2:21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

1Peter 4:1-2 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

"The blessed end or design of our Lord's sufferings was to bring us to God, to reconcile us to God, to give us access to the Father, to render us and our services acceptable, and to bring us to eternal glory", Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible.

Consider these thoughtful questions from the same commentary mentioned above.

"Now, if Christ was not exempted from sufferings, why should Christians expect it?

If He suffered, to expiate sins, why should not we be content when our sufferings are only for trial and correction, but not for expiation?

If He, though perfectly just, why should not we, who are all criminals?

If He once suffered, and then entered into glory, shall not we be patient under trouble, since it will be but a little time and we shall follow Him to glory?

If He suffered, to bring us to God, shall not we submit to difficulties, since they are of so much use to quicken us in our return to God, and in the performance of our duty to Him?"

When we suffer for truth, it conforms us to Christ. Jesus willingly died for the unjust in order to redeem us to His Father. The whole purpose for Christ's suffering was for our benefit. Therefore, it is a privilege to suffer for His Gospel.

having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

Consider – Jesus suffered for the sin of mankind; when it was finished, He was glorified. We have the opportunity to suffer for righteousness' sake, and when we die, we will be glorified with Him.

Hebrews 10:12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,

2Timothy 2:12 If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

1Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

Consider the people and things you are willing to suffer for. Most of us would gladly suffer for our family; if we are parents, we would suffer for our children. Many individuals would suffer for a cause they believe in.

But are we willing to suffer for what is most important? One commentary suggested we “*should be content to suffer, especially for His cause and truth*”, Poole. Suffering conforms us to Christ. With this in mind, we should be thankful when we go through difficult circumstances for His righteousness. His example reminds us to patiently endure. This encouragement also leads us back to 1Peter 2:18-22, and the charge to submission even when it might be difficult, even when it may lead to suffering, because it is commanded.

Personally, it is astonishing to think that God could use my life for His glory. Knowing who I once was and how He has changed my life, fills my heart with gratitude. Then to imagine that God can use my circumstances for His glory, is incredible! I pray our greatest cause in this world is Christ. We can patiently bear whatever sorrows we are exposed to because God is faithful in His protection of us and His promises to us. We can remain strong in Him for His glory.

“Moreover in the resurrection of Christ we have a convincing proof, that the sufferings of good men are not inconsistent with the perfections of God: for He will reward them with a blessed resurrection from the dead, accomplished after the example of Christ's resurrection. Wherefore the power of God, visible in Christ's resurrection, affords to all who lose their lives for the Gospel a sure ground of consolation and hope that God will raise them up at the last day”, Dr. Macknight.

Conclusion – If we suffer, it is better for us to suffer for righteousness, following the example of Christ. We are then conformed to His likeness and will one day live with Him in glory.