

16. Privilege of suffering for Jesus

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Two of many things I hate are pain and waiting. Whether it is a pain in the neck, or side or wherever, I hate all pains. I want easy going, I want everybody to do in my way and I don't want to wait for anything. A typical human attitude, huh?

The lasting I have in mind is suffering, especially suffering for somebody else. But the Lord Jesus had done that for us, while we were still His enemies.

Suffering and glory are woven throughout the epistle of 1 Peter. They are the two sides of the same coin. This book of 1 Peter is written for those who were suffering in Rome as Christians under the persecution of mad man Nero. We are going to study the climax and conclusion of the whole book.

As we studied before, Peter is talking to those early Christians in Rome and us that we need to keep our hope in Christ Jesus in the midst of suffering. We can sum up the entire book of 1 Peter in this short sentence: "Christian suffering with hope in Christ that transforms into glory."

We see the word, GLORY in this book for many times. Its Hebrew word is "chavod" and means, "Weighty or heavy." We who are in Christ Jesus have an access to this heavy glory through Jesus.

Generally we think that absence of suffering brings glory. But God says that the presence of suffering brings glory.

A. JOY OF DELIVERANCE

1Pet. 4:12-13 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

Nobody in right mind would feel sorry for a wife getting pregnant for her husband. You don't say to her, "Do you realize that how much pain this pregnancy is going to bring to you? Your joints are going to swell, you are going to walk around like a duck waddling and you are going to scream in pain while you deliver a child." But in truth, we rejoice with that woman for her pregnancy. Because she knows that all the pain of delivering a child will transform into joy of holding a new born child in her arms.

Jesus understood it, because He also delivered us, too. He knew the pains and suffering that He had to endure on the cross, would bring joy of delivering us from the hands of eternal death to eternal glorious life in heaven.

When the soldier at the cross took a spear and pierced the side of Jesus' body after He already died, water and blood flowed like water being broken and a flow of blood before a woman deliver a child. Jesus gave a birth from His side.

Jesus was called, "the last Adam, a life-giving Spirit", while the first Adam brought sins to his mankind.

1Cor. 15:45 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

Adam was put to sleep by God and God opened Adam's side and brought birth of his bride, Eve. From the side of the last Adam, Jesus, He gave a birth of His bride, us.

Hebr. 12:2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Whatever the agonies in our lives we are suffering, can birth glory in God if we patiently endure them with His strength.

B. PRIVILEGE OF SUFFERING FOR JESUS

1Pet. 4:14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.

The highest privilege for a believer is to suffer for the sake of Christ. At those times the Holy Spirit comes near and brings strength and a sense of God's glory. A prime example can be found in Acts 7:54-60, the account of Stephen's martyrdom.

1Pet. 4:15-16 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

Instead of shame, we should feel honored when we suffer for our Lord. For it is a privilege to bear wounds for Him who was pierced through for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities.

If I get arrested by authority for being a Christian, I hope that they can find enough evidences in my life to convict me with an air tight case. How about you? Can non-believers around your neighborhoods and at your workplace see you as a true Christian while you suffer for Christ, not just another so-called Christian who claims with mouth, but no walk to follow?

1Pet. 4:17-19 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

God's cleansing starts from the house of God, that is us. I believe that those who use the name of Jesus to gain their selfish desires in Christian realm will face terrible consequences.

C. SHEPHERD THE FLOCK

Practically every church has with expectations from pastors and congregations. The pastor expects his congregation with commitment of the apostles, and the congregation, in turn, expects a pastor who can walk on water. Either expectation is nothing more than wishful thinking of their selfish parts. To endure one another and to encourage one another, pastors must be men who possess a great deal of patience, grace, understanding, and love for their people. The same is true for congregations. Without such tolerance, few pastors would last. Do you know the average life of a pastor in the same church is three years? Do you also know that 24 churches close down in any given week in America? Why? Wrong expectations and unholiness.

1Pet. 5:1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

Peter is qualified to speak because he is a fellow elder, a witness of Jesus' sufferings - at His torture and crucifixion, and a partaker of Jesus' glory - at His transfiguration. He can speak with the authority of eyewitness experience. Peter claims no special privilege, or claiming to be the first pope, or seeing himself only as the elder among all the elders in the church.

1Pet. 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

It is extremely vital and life & death matter for pastors and elder to teach and lead their congregations to the true doctrines of Christianity, so that they may not lead them into disasters.

There are many garbage of false doctrines floating in Christian churches from holy laughter to Eastern philosophy, not to mention secular style Christian psychology. We don't need that, but we need the true Word of God.

The Word of God is what we need to grow in the Lord. That is what pastors should do for their congregations, equipping the saints.

Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa once said this, "The maturity of the congregation can be measured by the maturity of their pastor."

There are many pastors across America who use the books that are written by men to teach their congregation on Sunday morning or Midweek Bible studies. Those books are not infallible like the Bible. They ought to be shamed of themselves for that. We should not replace the Word of God with any other book to teach from the pulpit.

F. B. Meyer said, "None of God's soldiers are mercenaries or pressed men. They are all volunteers. We must have a shepherd's heart if we would do a shepherd's work."

Shepherds should not do their job for dishonest gain, but eagerly, willing to serve quite apart from financial compensation.

1Pet. 5:3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

The way I understand from the Book of Acts, Titus and 1 Timothy regarding the church government is like this:

Under the teaching elder we call pastor, there are a group of godly men who support and serve the pastor with prayers and advises. They are elders. They are not there to micro manage the pastor, but to serve and support him in check and balance. Because absolute power corrupt people absolutely.

These elders oversee the group of men who are called as deacons which mean servants. These deacons are the one who actually get down to congregation level to make personal contacts, because one pastor cannot help all the congregations.

1Pet. 5:4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

The pastor should not be a dictator, but a servant leader. While a dictator says, "Go!", a true godly servant leader says, "Follow me, as I follow the Lord Jesus!"

The pastor doesn't work for the sheep. But he works for the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Pastors and elders are called by God, not by a majority votes or popularity from congregations.

D. GOD'S FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

Fortune, fame, power and pleasure are the elements of the formula for success. What is missing? A vertical relationship with God.

Contrary to the world's formulas for success, God's formula does offer relief which brings "peace with God and in God" to our hearts. However, we cannot have peace in God unless we first have peace with God. People who haven't received Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord, do not have peace with God. Until that happens, they will never enter into peace in God.

1Pet. 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

Humility shows itself in submission. It is the ability to cheerfully put away our own agenda for God's, even if God's agenda is expressed through another person. "Be clothed" is a rare word that refers to 'a slave putting on an apron before serving', even as Jesus did before washing the disciples' feet.

God's formula for success starts at **SUBMISSION** to God. We are to submit to those who are wise and to "clothe" ourselves with humility.

1Pet. 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

The second is our **HUMILITY** to God.

In the Old Testament, God's hand symbolized two things. The first is discipline and the second is deliverance. When we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, we willingly accept His discipline as being for our good and for His glory. And we gratefully acknowledge His deliverance that is always in His time and in His way.

Luke 14:11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

1Pet. 5:7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

The third strategy for success has to do with **ANXIETY**. We are to cast all our anxiety upon Him. The original meaning of "Cast" in Greek is "To throw upon". We need to realize that we cannot change the circumstances with our own power. But we can have humility and dependency by throwing our anxiety upon Him who loves us so much.

True humility is shown by our ability to cast our cares upon God. It is prideful presumption to take things into our own worry and care that God has promised to take care of.

We need to realize who we are and who God is, when we do that we can humble ourselves and depend on God for everything.

Here is God's formula for success in Him:

SUBMISSION + HUMILITY – ANXIETY = PEACE IN GOD

E. FACING THE ENEMY

This epistle was written to people in pain. But Peter was not offering how to get out of pains and trials. As a matter of fact, he was explaining them to stay in trials and pains. Philip Yancey says in his fine book, "Where is God when it hurts?": "Christians don't really know how to interpret pain. If you pinned them against the wall, in a dark secret moment, many Christians would probably admit that pain was God's one mistake. He really should have worked a little harder and invented a better way of coping with the world's dangers."

While God uses difficult trials and tests to draw us closer to Him, Satan uses them as levers to pry us away from Him.

1Pet. 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Some version calls "enemy" as "adversary" which refers to an opponent in a lawsuit. The other word used to describe our enemy is the devil, which means accuser (Greek, diabolos). Satan is determined to do everything to accuse us, discourage us and condemn us.

The way Satan does is by stealth. He "prowls around," stalking our every step, waiting for our off guard moments. His goal is to devour us.

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

To defeat the devil we must first respect – not fear or revere – but respect him, like an electrician respects the power of electricity or mountain climbers respect what the high snow covered mountain can do.

1Pet. 5:9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

We need to start the fight from truth. Without knowing truth, you and I can be deceived and play right along with the devil's tune.

With that truth, we need righteousness of God, not ours. Because our righteousness is nothing more than a filthy rag. We need to stand ground in the readiness of the Gospel of peace.

Resisting the devil means more than just saying "I don't want to do that." It might require us to remove something from our lives or changing jobs or turning off the TV or walking away from temptation and trap.

After we say, "No" to temptation and if we continuously stay there, we can call ourselves stupid. It is asking for a trouble.

1Pet. 5:10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

There is no temptations or trials that is more than we can take. Because God won't allow them to come in our direction, unless God granted. God knows how much we can take.

Will there be suffering in resisting satan? You bet.

Will it be painful? Without a doubt.

Can we lose our lives? Absolutely not, unless that is the time for us to go to the presence of God. Going to the presence of God is NOT A DEFEAT. It is a victory over death that might have taken us to hell, but we will be in heaven with our Jesus.

Phil. 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

1Pet. 5:11-14 To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand. She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) We must remember that the sufferings we face in Christ will bring glory to our Lord, if we endure.

2) To have peace in God, we must be submissive to His will with humility without anxiety.

3) Let's remember that suffering on this world is nothing more than temporal and its rewards are eternal.