

# Sharing in the Sufferings of Christ

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1 Peter 3.13-22

13 And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. 17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. 21 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. (NKJV)

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## vss. 13-14 - Persecution: The Usual and the Unusual

**..if** you become followers of what is good -

(Subjunctive, 3rd Class condition "Future More Probable")

The general principle is that if you are not an evil-doer or rabble-rouser, then the authorities will not be bothering you

This is what Peter has just laid out quoting from Psalm 34.

He who would love life and see good days...

The apostle Paul says the same thing in Romans 13

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. (Romans 13:3-4 NKJV)

But **even if** you do suffer on for righteousness's sake... -

(Optative, 4th Class condition, "Future Less Probable")

stated grammatically as a remote possibility.

Though persecution for righteousness is unusual in a general sense, in the Kingdom of God it should be expected.

Peter says later in the next chapter:

12 Beloved, **do not think it strange** concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 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. (1 Peter 4:12-13 NKJV)

(Scripture interprets Scripture)

Peter echos what he has learned from Jesus.

18 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. (John 15:18-20 NKJV)

Paul says the same thing

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12 NKJV)

You could say that persecution is the "new normal" in the Gospel and the Kingdom of God.

### **You are blessed**

literally, "(you are) blessed ones"

- present tense, not just referring just to our future reward (which is real!) but more to our **current state** of being blessed in Christ

Let's recall how Peter begins this letter:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5 NKJV)

Our amazing riches in Christ!

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, **if need be**, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, (1 Peter 1:6-8 NKJV)

**if need be** - if it is necessary for our sanctification, for being conformed to the image of Jesus, for being made like Him.

In all this we "rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory"

Peter knew this from his own first-hand experience

40 when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 So they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy** to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:40-41 NKJV)

Again Peter is echoing what He learned from Jesus his master:

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10 NKJV)

Again, the Jesus' beatitude is also present tense. As Peter says later in chapter 4:

If you are reproached for the name of Christ, **you are blessed**, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1 Peter 4:14 NKJV)

- The blessing is that we are being given the highest honor to actually SHARE in the sufferings of Christ.
- To be identified with Him
- We are united to Him in His death, burial and resurrection
- He is not ashamed to call us brethren.
- Our sufferings are perfecting us, as they did Him

8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, (Hebrews 5:8-9 NKJV)

## vss. 14-17a - How do we respond to persecution?

Peter is quoting from Isaiah.

12 ...nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. 13 The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread. (Isaiah 8:12-13 NKJV)

which points as another example to why it is so important for us to know the Word.

Scripture interprets Scripture.

Part of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to bring His words to our remembrance. But He can't do this unless we have already hidden His words in our hearts.

## Do not be afraid or troubled

Literally, "Do not a-feared with their fear"

that is, they (whether men or the wicked spirits behind them) want to PUT FEAR on you, to disable you and render you ineffective in your testimony.

or "**troubled**" - the word means to be affected with grief and anxiety, to be unsettled and *agitated* like water - the peace and calm is disturbed.

We need to hear the voice of Jesus speaking to the wind and the waves: "Peace, be still"

- Peter reflecting on his own failure in the courtyard of the High Priest.
- Peter echoing what he learned from Jesus his Lord:

"Let not your heart be **troubled**; you believe in God, believe also in Me. (John 14:1 NKJV)

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be **troubled**, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27 NKJV)

How do we keep from being afraid of their threats, and becoming trouble or agitated?

## Sanctify the Lord in your Heart

ἀγιάζω - "to separate, consecrate; cleanse, purify, sanctify; regard or reverence as holy"

as in the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, **Hallowed** be Your name. (Matthew 6:9 NKJV)

..to regard and revere the Lord above everything else. Note that when the Lord taught us to pray, that this is FIRST.

Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread. (Isaiah 8:13 NKJV)

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28 NKJV)

It has been rightly said that if you have a healthy and right fear of God, you will not fear any man.

From Brad's sermon: "When we are not secure in our identity in Christ, we will tend to walk in fear of man, which is trying to please others and focusing on how others are perceiving us rather than on God who is truly the only audience we need to please."

It is perilous to fear the rejection of men, and equally perilous to regard the praise of men, like the Pharisees, of whom it says:

they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. (John 12:43 NKJV)

## Be Always Ready to Give a Reason

ἔτοιμοι αἰεὶ πρὸς **ἀπολογία** παντὶ τῷ αἰτοῦντι ὑμᾶς λόγον περὶ τῆς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐλπίδος

APOLOGIA - case for the defense in a courtroom

We need to be able to do more than offer a sentimental subjective answer like "Jesus loves me and He makes me happy"

That's OK, but it won't hold up in court. We need to be able to give a well-reasoned defense.

### **know the Word**

We are called and privileged to know the Word.

- to know what we believe
- to know why we believe it
- to be able to clearly tell others the gospel in logical order

Consider that we are talking about the very words of God given to men.

The condescension of God Most High:

But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.  
(Isaiah 66:2 NKJV)

### **What is the gospel? What would you say?**

We can start with 1 Corinthians 15.3

3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 NKJV)

That is a start, but we need to be able to fill it out from Scripture. We can use "the Romans Road"

### **The Romans Road of Salvation**

scriptures from the letter of Paul to the Romans which lay out the way of salvation.

The Gospel - why is it so important to know it?

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16 NKJV)

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23 NKJV)

For the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23a NKJV)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 NKJV)

but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23b NKJV)

9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10 NKJV)

For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." (Romans 10:13 NKJV)

## The Fruit of the Gospel in your life

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Romans 5:1 NKJV)

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, (Romans 8:1 NKJV)

- preach the Gospel to yourself - build yourself up in the faith
- Scripture interprets Scripture. Study and connect the dots
- make it personal - relate the Word to your own experience
- ask the Holy Spirit (He wrote it!) to teach you
- water your testimony with thanksgiving and praise

## with meekness and fear

- knowing that we have nothing to boast of before God or men, except the cross of Christ

4 ¶ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (Ephesians 2:4-6 NKJV)

knowing that apart from the grace and mercy of God, we are guilty before God, and would be like this one attacking us, or worse.

Consider what Paul says of himself:

I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy (1 Timothy 1:13 NKJV)

- and looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who has gone before us, and left us an example that we should follow in His steps. Peter has pointed to this in 2.23

when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; (1 Peter 2:23 NKJV)

## having a good conscience

- clean heart and hands, nothing hidden, no secret sins
- keeping short accounts, no unforgiveness or bitterness
- walking in forgiveness, nothing unconfessed (1 John 1.9)

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9 NKJV)

- being free from shame and condemnation (Romans 8.1)

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, (Romans 8:1 NKJV)

cf. vs 21, on the nature of baptism: "the answer of a good conscience"

## vss. 16b-17 - The Result of a Good Response

If we are not ashamed, then they will be.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16 NKJV)

### Sharing in His Suffering

"Suffering for doing good"

You may not have experienced what we normally call "persecution"

You may say "I don't think that I have really suffered for Christ."

Whenever your will (the flesh) crosses the will of the Father, we must lay down our life and surrender to Him. Dying to the desires of your flesh is sharing in the sufferings of Christ.

23 "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. (Luke 9:23-24 NKJV)

Paul says

I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. (1 Corinthians 15:31 NKJV)

Following the example of our Lord's suffering in Gethsemane: "not my will but Yours be done"

Hence Peter concludes this thought in the next chapter with:

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, (1 Peter 4:1 ESV)

## vs. 18 - The Purpose of Christ's Suffering

Jesus suffered, the just for the unjust, "once" for all time.

"It is finished"

Why? **That he might bring us to God.**

Jesus did not suffer and die just to forgive our sins, but to give us LIFE, and LIFE ABUNDANTLY.

Forgiveness is the beginning, not the end.

And this is eternal life, that they may **know** You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3 NKJV)

This is what he prayed for:

¶ "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, (John 17:24 NKJV)

## vss. 19-22 - His Victory is Our Salvation

### Put to death in the flesh, made alive in the Spirit

As Thomas says, we could preach sermons on this one verse.

As a man, his human body was killed. He gave His life as an offering for our sins, who was the sinless Lamb of God He became sin to take away the sin of the world. That God might be just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus

But as He trusted God His Father, though forsaken, He commended his spirit and the Father did not leave him in Hades, but raised Him up, thus proclaiming Him to be the Son of God in power by the resurrection from the dead.

### The Spirits in Prison

About 5 different views on who are the spirits in prison, and how and when Jesus preached to them.

I have an opinion, but I don't hold it too strongly.

This seems to correlate to what Peter says later in 4.6

For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. (1 Peter 4:6 NKJV)

and what Paul says in Ephesians 4

8 "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." 9 Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? (Ephesians 4:8-9 NKJV)

It's an interesting topic, but we should not get sidetracked on it and miss Peter's main point.

which is: that by Christ's once for all suffering He conquered sin death and the grave, and won for us salvation and all the blessing of the Kingdom

### The Flood as a Figure

Water is instrument of judgment Water is also the instrument of salvation Saved by passing through water in the Ark

As sin brings death to us in judgment, also our sin laid upon Christ is our salvation Saved by going through water (death) by means of the Ark (the Cross)

### Baptism now saves you

"antitype" is a corresponding figure or type.

As the Flood is a type of our salvation in Christ, so baptism corresponds to it, in with a clearer picture, our death, burial and resurrection in Jesus.

### What Peter is not saying



that the *outward act of baptism* itself saves us.

He makes this clear by saying it is "not the removal of the filth of the flesh" i.e. getting wet with water, not the ceremony itself.

### What Peter is saying

What Ananias says to Paul when calling him to baptism:

Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' (Acts 22:16 NKJV)

- The action of faith - "calling on His name"
- "whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"
- The work of God is to believe.

"the answer of a good conscience"

the same thing Peter said about being ready, i.e. knowing the freedom of forgiveness of our sins, we obey believing we are united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:22 NKJV)

### The triumph of Jesus Christ

This passage concludes with a statement of Jesus' absolute authority in heaven and earth, just as in the great commission:

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples (Matthew 28:18-19 NKJV)

Walking in this knowledge is what enables to keep our spiritual poise, to love our enemies, to respond when someone challenges us, with "meekness and fear"