

## 14. Learning to Suffer According to the Will of God

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to serve in the strength that the Lord supplies. We saw that will happen as those who have speaking gifts speak the very Word of God instead of speaking their own ideas or opinions. We saw that those who have serving gifts will be effective as they learn to serve in the strength that the Lord supplies instead of trying to serve in their own strength. By doing those things, they will bring glory to God through Christ. In this topic, we see that we want to help our children learn to suffer according to the will of God.

In 1 Peter 4:12-13 we read, “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.” Peter reminded the Christians again that he had a great love for them. Peter understood that the Christians in his day were going to experience great suffering as this book was written close to the time that the Roman emperor burned Rome. To cover his own evil, the emperor blamed the Christians for burning Rome. As a result, Peter knew that Christians would need real encouragement as they suffered.

The word that is translated “fiery trial” means “*burning to test metals or trials that test our character.*” In this verse, it is talking about the difficult trials that Christians go through that test or refine our character. The word that is translated “happened” means “*something that God allows to happen.*” In Acts 20:19 Paul said, “Serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews.” Here, we see that Paul talked of the things that happened to him because of the plotting of the Jews. God allowed those things to happen in the life of Paul so that the Gospel could be spread to many places. In the same way, God allows trials in our own lives to test or refine our character and to allow the Gospel to spread to others.

The word “partake” means “*to be a partner or a sharer.*” As a result, Peter encouraged the Christians to rejoice because they were given the opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ. Christ suffered for doing the things that were right. In the same way, when we suffer for Christ, we are suffering for doing the things that are right and rejoice for the privilege of suffering for Christ. Acts 5:41 says, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” The apostles had been beaten for speaking about Christ and they rejoiced for the privilege of suffering for Christ. We can also rejoice when we suffer for Christ.

However, in the future, there will be a time of even greater rejoicing. The glory of Christ will be revealed when He comes back to take us to heaven. At that time, we read that we will be glad with exceeding joy. Peter shared this same thought when he said in 1 Peter 1:6-8, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 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, whom having not

seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.” The word that is translated “exceeding joy” here is translated “greatly rejoice” and “rejoice.”

We go on to see the viewpoint of God when we suffer for Christ. 1 Peter 4:14 says, “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 word that is translated “you are reproached” means “*to be treated evilly and to be spoken against for the name of Christ.*” Peter wrote that when such things happen we are blessed. The word that is translated “blessed” is used nine times in Matthew 5:3-11. Matthew 5:10-11 says, “‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.’” We can look forward to blessing from the Lord when we are spoken against and persecuted for Christ.

At the very time that we are going through such suffering, we see that God promises that the Spirit of glory and of God will rest upon us. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” In our very times of weakness, we experience the strength of Christ working in our lives.

Peter went on to tell the Christians in 1 Peter 4:15-17, “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. 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?” Here, we see that Peter first reminded the Christians in his day that there are four things that we are to avoid so that we do not suffer for those things. The first three are a murderer, a thief or an evildoer. Such things will certainly bring judgment.

However, the fourth thing is something that Christians sometimes do. The word that is translated “a busybody in other people's matters” means “*a person who meddles in the affairs of others or one who takes the supervision of affairs pertaining to others.*” In 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, we read, “That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and *that* you may lack nothing.” Sometimes, a Christian will take it upon himself or herself to tell others what they should do and not do including the actions of people that are not Christians. Here, we see that we are to pay attention to our own actions and not try to tell others what they should or should not do. When we try to intrude into the business of others, especially non-Christians, they may turn against us and make us suffer for intruding into their business.

In contrast, if we suffer for our godly life and testimony as a Christian, we do not need to be ashamed. Instead of feeling shame when we suffer for being a Christian, we are to glorify God. We are to be thankful for the opportunity that the Lord has given us to be an example of godly

love to the world around us. Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Here, we see that we are to do good both to Christians and to those who are not yet Christians because such actions bring glory to God.

We see that judgment is to begin with those who are Christians and a part of the house of God. 1 Corinthians 11:28-32 says, “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” Here, we see that as Christians we are to examine ourselves. If we fail to examine ourselves, we see that we will be disciplined by the Lord. However, we will not be condemned with the world because Romans 8:1 says, “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” Since Christ will discipline us if we fail to examine ourselves, we are reminded that the judgment of those who are not Christians and who do not obey the Gospel will be much worse.

In 1 Peter 4:18-19 we read, “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.” Here, we are given a quote from Proverbs 11:31 which says, “If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, How much more the ungodly and the sinner.” Here, we see that those who are righteous (those who have placed their faith in Christ) will receive their discipline on the earth. However, those who do not turn to the Lord while they are alive on this earth will have their judgment in the future. Their judgment will be eternal because Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” That is why we are to leave all judgment to the Lord.

In contrast, there is a very different future for those who suffer according to the will of God. Those who suffer according to the will of God are those who have followed the example of Christ and are suffering from those who are not Christians because of our faith in Christ. We see that we can commit our souls to Him. The word that is translated “commit” is a banking term and means “*to make a deposit or to entrust something to another person.*” When we choose to do those things that are pleasing to God, we are entrusting our lives to God and can look to Him for reward. We know that we can look to Him for reward because He is the One that created us and gave us spiritual life.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn what it means to suffer according to the will of God, we are preparing them for any suffering that they may face in their lives. We are able to show them how to rejoice in such suffering as we experience joy during those times that we suffer for Christ. That makes it possible for them to be able to learn from us because of our example. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to suffer according to the will of God.