

Study 27

WHEN SUFFERING IS GOOD AND JUDGMENT NECESSARY

First Peter 4:12-19

"Why me?" "What did I ever do to deserve this?" A Christian needs to understand that life often has ups and downs, but God is still in control. A distressed and mourning father who had just tragically lost his son, angrily said to his family's pastor "Where was God when my son was dying?" The pastor replied, "The same place He was when His own Son was dying: *on the throne*". Peter tells believers that when they suffer because of persecution, they should not be surprised!

1. What does the Bible say awaits those that live godly lives? (2Tim. 3:12)



Peter told the Christians of the first century that they could expect to suffer persecution because they were living for God. The greatest example of this is Jesus Himself. No one suffered more than Christ. No one was more godly than Christ. Through the ages many holy people have suffered terribly from persecution. Living faithfully for God doesn't always exempt us from

persecution. Right now in the Sudan

there are thousands of Christians who have had their homes bull-dozed, their possessions confiscated, and their right to buy or sell denied, simply because they live for Christ! How much more should we be thankful that we have peace and freedom to worship Christ in our country!

2. If a Christian suffers for Christ, it is commendable. But why shouldn't we have sympathy for a Christian who suffers for the reasons given in 1Peter 4:15?

3. How did the first Church respond to persecution? (Acts 5:41)

SUFFERING PRODUCES GLORY!

Glory means dignity, honour, brightness, magnificence, splendour, excellence, praise, exalted state, and perfection. According to Philippians 2, Jesus laid aside His glory to become a man. As a man He suffered much opposition. In His final days He suffered intensely. But something dramatically happened to Christ after His ascension.

4. Christ prayed about this in John 17:5. What did He ask to be returned to Him?

God has promised us that if we endure suffering for His sake, we shall receive glory (2Cor. 3:18; 4:17; Col. 3:4; 2Tim. 2:12). The important thing now, is not what others think of us, but what God thinks of us. Reputation is what others think you are, character is what you really are. Suffering for good reasons produces character.

5. What didn't the early apostles seek from others? (1Thess. 2:6)

It would be easily understandable if the persecuted Christians of the first century were asking God to judge their persecutors. But it would be wrong for God to judge the world if His own people were involved in the same things that the world were doing. Therefore, judgment must begin with the "House of God", or "Family of God". All the more reason to make sure that God's people are not involved with worldliness and sinful lifestyles.

6. What warning is given to those who know God and His righteous judgment? (Romans 2:3)

Now, if God was using persecution to judge the motives of His people, and the short-term result was suffering, what will happen to the unrighteous when God starts judging them? If the righteous go through judgment and they live in obedience to God, what will happen when God starts judging those who don't live for God (vs. 17)? Peter says that the righteous are scarcely saved (vs. 18). This means that the righteous are not saved by their own works or efforts. They are saved by the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

7. What are believers encouraged to do in 1Peter 4:19?

Amen.