

TITLE: "Satisfaction in Suffering" (Part 3)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 2:19-20

THEME: *Every believer is a servant who is to suffer patiently and justly even as Christ suffered patiently and justly for him.*

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Read Passage

Main idea that envelopes these 8 verses==>

We are slaves of the Suffering Servant who are to strive for satisfaction in our sufferings since He suffered for us.

I have to admit that I have struggled tremendously with this whole idea the past week

I have struggled w/bouts of depression & sadness. I get depressed over my sin // How fast t/days click by // The sub-par job I do at teaching & preaching (past few weeks I have been working on transcribing my messages from audio to text. That means I have to listen to myself for several hour, every word) // Over difficult news (people struggling w/health problems or family issues) // For no apparent reason at all.

I have been faced with the reality of my thesis==>

We are slaves of the Suffering Servant who are to strive for satisfaction in our sufferings since He suffered for us.

I don't have a problem with the beginning or end {cite}. It's the middle part that I am struggling with.

What does it mean to {cite} ???

It doesn't mean that life is easy // we are outwardly happy when things seem to fall apart // spiritual masochists who derive great pleasure from

self-flagellation. It doesn't even mean that tragedies aren't still in some way tragedies.

It means that in t/midst of life's storms, for t/child of God, there can be peace in t/midst of suffering. One can find contentment. The hurricane may still be there, you may still feel t/violence of t/storm, t/thunder, t/raging wind, t/surf of one's circumstances furiously pounding against your life. But t/eye comes & in t/midst of all your worries there is a degree of peace knowing that this storm isn't driven by t/winds of chance, but by t/hand of God who will sustain you through it all.

I hope to be able to balance all of that over t/next few weeks as we look at a difficult but oh-so-relevant issue, "Satisfaction in Suffering."

As it relates to our passage . . .

I've said all along that it is unique in that it broadens in t/scope of its application, v. by v. Peter begins by addressing household servants, exhorting them to submit to their masters & before you know it he's addressing suffering, not only theirs but ours & t/work of X for each & every believer.

The first point we came to out of verse 18 ==>

I. Servants are to submit themselves to their masters (18)

Servants (οἰκέτης - household servants) were to obey their masters, their employers, in all things. They were to recognize the authority of their masters and in so doing were affirming that all authority comes from God.

This was part of their very worship.

Servants, submit yourselves to your masters with all fear.

Note that t/obedience to which they were called is unconditional ==>

Not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are perverse.

D. The Reason? God is pleased (18a and 20b)

Verse 19==>

For this [finds] favor (lit. "For this is grace" / "favor" is t/Gk. noun χαρις) **if out of consciousness toward God, one endures pain when suffering unjustly.**

1. That phrase "this finds favor" forms an inclusio

Verse 19 begins w/it & v. 20 ends w/it {cite}

It's serving to bookend an important idea. In this case that suffering for righteousness sake finds favor w/God.

God is pleased, He is glorified in our obedience to Him when we recognize those in authority over us & we submit to that authority knowing that all auth. comes from God.

Here's where we turn a corner.

G. Application for every Christian who is called to be a suffering servant (brings us to vv. 19-25)

II. God blesses us when we suffer well (19-20)

True for 1st c. servants & for us who live in a free nation today.

A. What it means to suffer well

Everyone suffers. Inescapable.

"The kingdom of suffering is a democracy, and we all stand in it or alongside it with nothing but our naked humanity." -- Philip Yancey, Leadership, Vol. 5, no. 2.

"Suffering can never ultimately be meaningless, because God himself has shared it." -- Philip Yancey, Leadership, Vol. 5, no. 2.

Not everyone suffers well. Not every Christian suffers well.

Remember our proposition ==>

We are slaves of the Suffering Servant who are to strive for satisfaction in our sufferings since He suffered for us.

This AM we're going to look at what it means to suffer well. Next time, we'll tackle t/issue of how we can better strive to be satisfied w/suffering.

But what does it mean to suffer well?

1. Suffering well means that we rest in God's providence (18b)

We cast ourselves upon the sustaining grace of His sovereignty.

a. I want you to note something out of verse 18==>

Servants, submit yourselves to your masters with all fear. Not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are perverse.

Implication is that God's sovereignty encompasses all circumstances of life. These servants were servants in keeping with God's providence. Some had gentle masters, some crooked, but this was in keeping w/God's providence.

God has a design for each life & that includes even t/circumstances of OUR suffering.

b. No Christian suffers by accident

Some people, even some pastors & theologians would like to think that most all suffering is simply a big cosmic accident.

I think of t/heresy of Open Theism. Open Theism is a new and novel idea that God does not know all future events. He knows some, but not all. It's a denial of His omniscience & his sovereignty, ultimately of his nature as God.

Insightful that one of t/leading apologists for O.T. has said much of his motivation for upholding this doctrine comes out of what he considers t/nonsense of suffering. He had a loved one killed in a motorcycle accident. He knew of a woman who wanted to serve God as a missionary & she met a man who claimed t/same & after much prayer they got married. Well, he abandoned her & left her to suffer w/o a life-long partner in missions.

So t/thought is, "How can this happen?" If God knew it was going to happen, they He must have some control over it, after all, He's God. But what if He didn't even know? So some people find great comfort in redefining God their way. *"He didn't know my loved one was to die in a tragic car accident." He was just as surprised by it as we all were!"*

I find little comfort in that. In a God who can be surprised by suffering; surprised by anything for that matter.

Nothing happens by accident, even t/believer's suffering.

(1) In theology we talk about the Providence of God

Providence is God's active control over all things. It includes His provision and care for creation, His love for t/believer, & His working in history.

His providence encompasses all of life, even our suffering. That's something we need to find rest in.

1. Suffering well means that we rest in God's providence (18b)

(a) Brief look at what the Bible says about God's Providence

i. Genesis chapter 50

Joseph, favored son of t/Patriarch, Jacob. His brothers become jealous of him & they secretly sell him into slavery. Through a series of events he ends up in Egypt where he's employed as a servant in t/employ of a high-ranking Egyptian officer. He is falsely accused & ends up in prison & from prison he ends up interpreting t/dreams of 2 men, one of whom ends up telling Pharaoh, who is himself being plagued by a strange dream. So Pharaoh sends for Joseph who interprets his dream, telling him that God is bringing seven good years to the land followed by seven years of famine. So you better stock up in those 7 good years.

The dream is prophetically given by God, t/circumstances happen just as Joseph said they would. Pharaoh heeds his advice & t/land of Egypt is spared & even prospers in t/process.

Meanwhile, Joseph's brothers, the very ones who sold him into slavery, come to Egypt during the famine to find provisions

Genesis 42:2-3 2 [Jacob tells them], “Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy some for us from that place, so that we may live and not die.” Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt.

They end up personally encountering Joseph (rem. they have no idea what's happened to him). When they find out that this chief official in Egypt, a very powerful man, is in reality t/brother that they betrayed, they are terrified. *"This guy's going to kill us for what we did to him, and he has t/power to do so!"*

But what does Joseph say {read 50:19-20}

ii. Exodus 4:10-12

God's providence extends even over what we would call "birth defects."

iii. 1 Samuel 2.6-9a

Here we have Hannah, a godly woman of Israel who was childless. She prayed, "God, give me a son and I will give him to you for the rest of his life." He did and she did. She names him Samuel & Samuel becomes 1 of 3 life-long Nazirites (others being Samson & J.T.B.).

She offers a sacrifice & she worships, & prays affirming God's providence in t/hearing of t/congregation {read vv. 6-9a}

iv. Turn to the book of Job

You remember the story of Job. God allows Satan to test him. Job loses his family, his wealth & his health. He's in misery! And his wife says to him, {read v. 9}. What does Job say? {v. 10a} "ra" = "evil, distress, misery, calamity."

You say, "Well, Job said this, but it doesn't mean that what he said was true." Look at the end of t/verse {10b}

v. Turn to the Psalms

{read 115:1-3} {135.1-6}

God is even providentially in control over t/length of our lives
{139:16}

See same thing in Job 14:5:

"Since [man's] days are determined, The number of his months is with Thee, And his limits (that is, the extent of his life) Thou hast set so that he cannot pass."

Paul recognized that, and so in 2 Timothy 4:6 he writes from Prison shortly before his death ==>

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

vi. Isaiah 45:9 and 46:10 state that God is the potter who has a right to full control over his creation, the clay

Passages Paul uses in Rom. 9.

vii. Turn over to Daniel chapter 4

{read v. 35}

viii. Could add Lamentations 3:38

Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth?

That's a very brief survey of t/O.T. on a narrow aspect of God's providence.

ix. We could also survey the NT (won't for time's sake)

Couple of examples suffice. I think of Jesus who says to Peter in Lk. 22 "Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." (one thinks of Job). "But I have prayed for you (I will sustain you) that your faith not fail and when once you have turned again, strengthened your brethren."

I think also of Philippians 1:29 where Paul says ==>

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

χαρίζομαι, to show favor. Similar to what we saw in 1 Peter 2:19a & 20b . . . (turn back to 1 Peter).

1. Suffering well means that we rest in God's providence (18b)

We have been called by God to suffer. That's verse 21 ==>

For you have been called for this [purpose] . . .

a. Why? Why would God subject us to suffering?

Is He cruel? Some sort of cosmic kill-joy? *After all, God, we understand why you might serve up suffering to those who reject you, but to us, your children, why?*

(1) We are still subject to the laws of sin

We may not experience the full power of sin. We are certainly except from the penalty of sin (eternal death). But we are still subject to t/effect of sin on a fallen creation. We are all subject to disease, decay and ultimately death.

We ask, "Why me?" Maybe we should ask, "Why not me?"

Beyond that, God has purposes in our suffering.

Suffering makes us Humble (Broken)

"Pain plants the flag of reality on the fortress of a rebel heart."

Suffering helps us understand what sin is all about (why Christ came - t/suffering He experienced).

Suffering helps us better ID w/others who suffer.

Romans 12:15 - "weep with those who weep"

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 **3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort;4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.**

When I'm suffering I don't want some plastic, Teflon stained-glass saint coming over to console me!

Suffering proves our faith - God can keep us through the trials by his omnipotence. Again, Job serves as a wonderful example in that regard. We saw that earlier in 1 Peter {read 1:5-7}

Suffering purges the sin from our lives.

Afflictions are sweet preservatives to keep the saints from sin.

-- Thomas Brooks in Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices. Christianity Today, Vol. 40, no. 6.

God whispers to us in our pleasures ... but shouts in our pains. -- C. S. Lewis in The Problem of Pain. Christianity Today, Vol. 41, no. 7.

It is good to learn early enough that suffering and God are not a contradiction but rather a unity, for the idea that God himself is suffering is one that has always been one of the most convincing teachings of Christianity. I think God is nearer to suffering than to happiness, and to find God in this way gives peace and rest and a strong and courageous heart.

-- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in a letter to his twin sister, Sabine. Christian History, no. 32.

James 1:2-4 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Romans 5:3-5 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;⁵ and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

1. Suffering well means that we rest in God's providence (18b)

That's what Paul did. Remember his "thorn in the flesh?" That which he writes about in 2 Cor. chapt. 12? Debate as to what this was. Some say it was physical illness, others a person, a trouble-maker.

Regardless, it was a point of suffering. And he says that he prayed to God three times that he might find relief. God said, "No."

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Paul rested in God's loving providence. Sufficient grace is what it means to be Satisfied in our suffering.

Oh how I am preaching to myself this AM! Oh, I how I must declare this to my own heart! I'm am not by nature a calm & collected person when it comes to my own suffering. I fear easily. I can become distraught w/panic, easily. I can become depressed, easily.

I can physically lift several hundred pounds in the gym, but in so many ways I am a weakling. I can only trust that when I am weak, then I am strong.

I'm not saying that this is t/natural thing to do. It's not natural; it's supernatural.

2. Suffering well means that we worship God in our suffering (18a and 19a)

For first century servants this worship = their obedience out of fear for God (v. 18a). Fear of t/Lord is t/beginning of wisdom, it's part of our worship.

a. Again, turn back to the OT book of Job

{read 1:1-22}

Job - worshiped! That's not what we think about today when we talk about worship is it? After all, worship is to be enjoyed. I can't worship if the music isn't good. I can't worship if the sermon is boring. I can't worship if t/sanctuary is too hot or cold. Worship means I feel good.

Maybe we have too narrow a definition of worship. I'm sure that Job didn't feel like worshiping at this time. He wasn't jumping up and down, smiling and giddy. How did he worship? He worshiped by acknowledging God's sovereignty, God's goodness, and God's greatness in spite of his circumstances. After all that's what the book is about (why do we serve God?).

(1) Job worshiped in his suffering because he was very much conscious of God

That's what we see in 1 Peter 2:19:

19 For this [finds] favor, if out of consciousness toward God, one endures pain when suffering unjustly.

Question as to which way this should be understood (conscience or

consciousness). Objective genitive so it should be understood as consciousness toward God. God, in the genitive, receives the action of the noun.

"conscious of God" (NIV) or "mindful of God" (RSV) are better translations than the NASB or KJV "conscience toward God."

This is the key. Pain endured for pain sake has no merit before God. This is what makes suffering meaningful. This is what allows for "satisfaction in suffering." This is not Stoicism. There is a confidence that God has my best in mind, that he will right all wrongs, that one day he will wipe away every tear.

Romans 12:12 ==>

rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,

Hebrews 12 ==> {summarize}

10b [God] disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,

The same Peter to whom Jesus said, "Satan has demanded permission to sift you as wheat" He also said in John 21 ==>

18 "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go."19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God . . .

Peter would glorify God even in his martyrdom, which tradition tells us was by crucifixion, not a normal crucifixion. Not feeling worthy to die as his Lord, t/account says Peter requested to be crucified upside down.

"Years ago, during the Boxer rebellion in China, the rebels captured a missionary training compound. They sealed off every gate that lead out of the compound except for one which they left open. They then took a cross and set it down in the dirt at the center of the gate and said to all of the missionaries and students who were there that if they were to walk out that gate and trample the cross under their feet, they could then go free. The first 7 students did just that. The 8th student, however, was a young girl who came to the cross, knelt down, prayed for strength, stood up and walked around the cross--right into the firing squad. 92 of the remaining student--all that were left--did the same thing and walked to their deaths rather than to trample the cross of Christ beneath their feet.

2. Suffering well means that we worship God in our suffering (18a and 19a)

We can do that because we know that He cares for us. After all, t/Father always loved t/Son & yet He allowed, even decreed t/Son's sufferings!

Romans 8:17-18 *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. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

8:35-39 *35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?36 Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It will pass; it's for a "little while" as we saw in 1:6.

1. *Suffering well means that we rest in God's providence (18b)*

2. *Suffering well means that we worship God in our suffering (18a and 19a)*

3. *Suffering well means that we suffer for righteousness sake (19b-20)*

19 For this [finds] favor, if out of consciousness toward God, one endures pain when suffering unjustly. 20 For what good would it be if, when you sin and are roughly treated, you endure it? But if you should suffer for doing good and endure it, this finds favor with God.

a. *Peter is referring to a principle that's a truism, not only for slaves, but for everyone*

Universal application. Rem. we said that there was an "inclusio" here "finds favor" - Bookends an important idea. The word "favor" is the same word translated "grace" in NT.

It only finds favor if one ==>

one endures pain (lit. "sorrows") when suffering unjustly.

b. *Word Pain is most often used of mental anguish*

Never used of physical pain. What Peter may have in mind are t/words of Jesus in Matthew 5 ==>

Matthew 5:10-12 10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.11 "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.12 "Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

3. *Suffering well means that we suffer for righteousness sake (19b-20)*

Joseph suffered for righteousness sake. In chapter 39 he refused t/illicit appeals of Potiphar's wife who then, in retaliation falsely accused him which landed him in prison.

The ultimate example, as we will see, is Jesus Christ (vv. 23-25). No one can lay claim to greater suffering than Christ!

So "unjustly" is a key word.

c. Be sure that your suffering isn't because of your sin

For what good would it be if, when you sin and are roughly treated, you endure it?

(1) *κολαφιζω* - strike with the fist, to beat, to treat roughly

Could be translated "pummeled." Cf. Matthew 26:67.

Peter uses this term not to specifically single out slaves, but to pave the way to his transition to the suffering of Jesus in vv. 21-13.

Peter doesn't anticipate that all of his readers, or even those who were slaves, would be literally "pummeled." But they would suffer.

So he says,

For what good would it be . . .

Literally, "what glory or fame would it be . . . "

. . . if, when you sin and are roughly treated, you endure it?

(2) Peter is using irony

"What kind of glory is there for someone who does wrong, is punished, and then endures the punishment as if that was something meritorious in itself?" You got what you deserved!

Perhaps the best picture of this would be a child who knowingly disobeys his parents and gets disciplined. He endures that discipline: "Yes, dad - I deserve this and I will take it like I should." And then he goes and does the same thing so that he can be endure the same discipline all over again." We would call a child who does that foolish. We would call an adult, slave or otherwise, who does it stupid. There's no glory in being punished for what you deserve.

How many people have I seen who have made their own bed of suffering. How often this occurs in relationships. The stories of Christians who have married unbelievers and have suffered through the pain of that relationship or a divorce are legion. They will fill a library.

As my mother used to say: "You made your bed, now lie in it."

There is no valor in suffering because of your own stubborn rebellion against God.

But if you should suffer for doing good and endure it, this finds favor with God.

1. Suffering well means that we rest in God's providence (18b)

2. Suffering well means that we worship God in our suffering (18a and 19a)

3. *Suffering well means that we suffer for righteousness sake (19b-20)*

I can't think of any greater example of these three points and what it means to suffer well than the life and death of James M. Boice. Boice is one of my heroes. He was a pastor-theologian, a gifted preacher, a man of humility and grace. He preached at the 10th Presbyterian church from 1968 until his death in the year 2000.

Still in his prime at age 60/61 he was diagnosed with inoperable liver cancer and died less than two months after his diagnosis.

A scant few weeks before he died he appeared before his congregation and gave the following testimony which I have abridged.

I do want to bring the call to worship this morning. But before I do that, I thought you might be interested—and it might be helpful to all of us—if I took a moment to fill you in on some of these medical problems.

Let me just give you a summation of what has happened. I had been feeling quite good until recently. But [then I began to feel ill] . . . when I came back from Chicago, I went to the doctor and had a number of tests. And the bottom line of that is that they diagnosed liver cancer. I'm in the care of a [good doctor]; and what I am receiving at the moment, beginning last Thursday, is standard chemotherapy for cancer. It's hard to tell where that comes out. Liver cancer is a very serious thing. They do get response from treatment in a percentage of cases, but it's relatively small. And as far as I can tell, we're doing the best thing we can.

Above all, I would say pray for the glory of God. If you think of God glorifying himself in history and you say, where in all of history has God most glorified himself? He did it at the cross of Jesus Christ, and it wasn't by delivering Jesus from the cross, though he could have.

Jesus said, “Don’t you think I could call down from my Father ten legions of angels for my defense?” But he didn’t do that. And yet that’s where God is most glorified.

If I were to reflect on what goes on theologically here, there are two things I would stress. One is the sovereignty of God. That’s not novel. We have talked about the sovereignty of God here forever. God is in charge. When things like this come into our lives, they are not accidental. It’s not as if God somehow forgot what was going on, and something bad slipped by. It’s not the answer that Harold Kushner gave in his book, *Why Bad Things Happen to Good People*. God does everything according to his will. We’ve always said that.

But what I’ve been impressed with mostly is something in addition to that. It’s possible, isn’t it, to conceive of God as sovereign and yet indifferent? God’s in charge, but he doesn’t care. But it’s not that. God is not only the one who is in charge; God is also good. Everything he does is good. And what Romans 12, verses 1 and 2, says is that we have the opportunity by the renewal of our minds—that is, how we think about these things—actually to prove what God’s will is. And then it says, “His good, pleasing, and perfect will.”

Is that good, pleasing, and perfect to God? Yes, of course, but the point of it is that it’s good, pleasing, and perfect to us. If God does something in your life, would you change it? If you’d change it, you’d make it worse. It wouldn’t be as good. So that’s the way we want to accept it and move forward, and who knows what God will do? I

Now our call to worship: I’m going to read from 1 Chronicles chapter 16: “Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among the peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy is his dwelling place. Ascribe to the Lord, O family of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength, ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him and worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. Tremble before him, all the earth!”