

TITLE: "Satisfaction in Suffering" (Part 4)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 2:21-23

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

In some ways I feel like the man who jumped on his horse and rode of madly in all directions

This is part 4 of our series {title} a series that covers vv. 18-25 of 1 Pet. 2. We've been preaching thru 1 Peter, a series we began 2 + years ago & we are nearing our 60th message in t/epistle. We've covered about 46 vv. so far & math was never 1 of my better subjects, but even I can figure out that we are covering less than a v. a wk.

Lest some of you think I take great pride in that accomplishment

I really don't. Like to move more quickly, after all, I'm not getting any younger & I always thought I'd like to preach thru t/entire NT & at t/present rate I'd have to rival Noah in age to do so. Maybe just 2 Peter, Jude, Pauline Epistles & Hebrews (maybe by t/time I get to Hebrews t/adult class will be done w/it).

BTW - in case you're interested, that's t/plan: to finish 1 Peter, then cover 2 Peter and Jude, then Ephesians and maybe Romans. If the Lord wills!

I keep saying that we're going to pick up t/pace & I mean to do that, but as I study t/passage I find that there's just so much there. God's Word is indeed a gold mine that can never be exhausted. But I do suspect that by time we're finished w/this book we will have bumped t/avg. up to at least a v. per week.

We've been taking a look at suffering {title}

We've said all along that this is central to t/message of 1 Peter (Hope for the Hurting). In fact, turn back to chapter 1 {read vv. 3-9}

Three things we noted in verse 6

1) Suffering is unavoidable. "if necessary" (1st class condition). Not only unavoidable, it's necessary, needful (we are called to it by God).

2) Suffering is temporary. "for a little while." It's not forever; it will pass. If you turn over to 5:10 see same thing....

Bill Hadeen was 1 of my first pastors/mentors as a young Xn. Bill had a saying: "The best times for t/believer are always future."

That doesn't mean there's nothing good for us now. But no matter how much joy we experience, now matter how acutely we learn to be satisfied w/the sweet goodness of our God - now - it's only going to be better then. That's something we fix our hope on during t/tough times. {read 1:13b}

BTW - Bill and his wife, Wanda, are living t/reality of that right now. Bill, you see, is in t/late stages of Alzheimer's. His once sharp mind, a mind that was fixed on t/hope of grace, is now ravaged by t/unending progress of this disease. (I trust that t/Sp. of God cont. to set his soul firmly upon grace, even if t/reality of that flickers dimly in his mind).

Suffering . . . It is necessary . . . Just like our Master, for us a crown of thorns must come before the crown of gold.

Thirdly, suffering is many-faceted. It's diverse. It comes w/many faces. There's no single sacred way to suffer. V. 6 - "various" - (ποικίλος - used of t/spots on a leopard, changing months/seasons).

Talked many times about t/sacred-secular dichotomy that we need to avoid

I fear that false dichotomy even extends to how we, as Xns, perceive suffering. IOW - We tend to think of suffering in a sacred/secular way as well. We think t/only suffering that God uses or blesses is t/kind that's been baptized in some way w/Xn dress. *"Yes, those who are being persecuted for their faith or dying as martyrs, that's Christian suffering."* Yes, it is. And it is a special kind of suffering that God notes & rewards {cite Rev. 6:10}. But, we tend to think that's t/only relevant suffering, as if God is only cares about what we call "persecution."

"If I'm tortured for my faith, if I'm ostracized & hated because of my stand for Gospel, that's Christian suffering." "But there's nothing noteworthy about suffering from an illness, or a difficult job, or finances, or an abusive spouse, or headaches, or depression." Folks, that's just not true. There is a sense in which affliction is affliction & God is sovereignly in control over "brand X" that you have, are or will have to endure. Again, 1 caveat - as we've seen from our text, SO LONG AS IT IS NOT A RESULT OF YOUR SIN.

Think of the life of Jesus

While there is no record of X suffering from a particular illness, He did suffer from a premature death. He did suffer from difficult people, He did have friends who turn against Him.

He even suffered what we could call "family problems." ==> Rem. John 7 - Jesus was avoiding Judea because t/Jews there were seeking to kill Him, and His brothers encouraged Him to go there anyway, and as John adds in v. 5: "for not even His brothers were believing in Him." His own brothers hated him so much that, like those of Joseph, they were willing to sell His very life!

Jesus also suffered mental anguish (I know that emotional pain can be more distressing than physical):

MAT 26:37 **And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed.**

MAR 14:33 **And He *took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled.**

LUK 12:50 **"But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!"**

It's noteworthy in that regard that t/word for pain in 1 Peter 2:19 ==>

one endures pain (lit. "sorrows") . . .

λύπας (λύπας - pain, grief, sorrow * Noun: Feminine Accusative Plural).

Accusative of direct object. Note the use of the plural. "Sorrows."

Mental anguish. 16x the word is used as a noun and 26x as a verb
it is never used of physical pain.

How many of God's saints over t/centuries have suffered torments that resided solely w/i t/confines of their mind? I know what it's like to feel imprisoned w/i a never ending maze of depression & solicitude.

The 80s and 90s were most difficult for me

I was looking over some old journal entries I made & at one point I wrote:
"To this day, the few years leading up to mid-1990 were my darkest. I sincerely lived with little hope these years, which culminated in a year of personal torment from around mid-1989 to mid-1990."

I also wrote at that time:

"I feel like giving up my aspirations for ministry, how can I preach with conviction, hypocritically, truths I don't follow? My hope is the fact that God characteristically uses weak vessels to display His power. I certainly qualify for a weak vessel!"

Yet, I can see how God has used these times, these periods of brokenness in my life to forge humility & grace in my life. Yet, my heart aches for those who suffer in a similar way - many whose afflictions far outdistance my own.

I have mentioned William Cowper before

Cowper, of course, was a tremendous poet/hymn writer who was born in 1731.

Cowper was afflicted with bouts of depression and fear. He 3x attempted suicide & by God's mercy he was unsuccessful. During his stay of eighteen months in the asylum at St. Albans, however, Cowper was converted while reading the book of Romans.

He moved to Olney where John Newton was pastoring a church & Newton served to be a life-long friend and support to Cowper.

One writer notes that ==>

"The period at Olney was a time of healing and spiritual growth for Cowper. Newton urged Cowper to serve Olney's poor, probably in an effort to take Cowper's mind off his depressions, poor health, paranoia, and fears of damnation. He also convinced Cowper to write hymns for the parish's prayer meetings. The result was *Olney Hymns* (1779), which contained 348 hymns--68 by Cowper, who suffered a relapse and was unable to finish his work.

Three of his best-known works are "There Is a Fountain," "Safely through Another Week," and "O for a Closer Walk with God." His famous hymn "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" was written about the time of another bout of mental illness, during which Cowper again attempted suicide. Despite this, John Newton said of him, "I can hardly form an idea of a closer walk with God than he uniformly maintained." [-- "The Golden Age of Hymns," *Christian History*, no. 31.]

Yet, this dear saint lived a life laced w/much misery. As Piper notes, Newton did all he could to try to tend to the tangled garden of Cowper's soul. And even when he died in t/year 1800 he told a visiting doctor that he felt "unutterable despair" (one account maintains that he also declared that he was not shut out of heaven after all).

We wonder why? But perhaps w/o his struggles he would not have written "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" (1774) which has ministered to 1000s who have suffered similar despair==>

God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform; He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines, Of never failing skill, He treasures up his bright designs and works His sovereign will.

You fearful saints, fresh courage take; The clouds you so much dread, Are big with mercy and shall break, In blessings on your head.

His purposes will ripen fast, Unfolding every hour; The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err, And scan his work in vain; God is his own interpreter, and he will make it plain."

1) Suffering is unavoidable. 2) Suffering is temporary. 3) Suffering is many-faceted.

For t/believer, suffering is not w/o purpose. And so ==>

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

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

We saw last week that ==>

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

We throw ourselves upon t/sustaining grace of His sovereignty, a sovereignty that encompasses all circumstances of life. {cite Matt. 10:30}

a. No Christian suffers by accident

God has a design for each life & that includes your suffering.

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

a. We looked at the life of Job . . .

Job loses his family, his wealth & his health. His wife tells him to curse God and die. Job responds by affirming two things: 1) God's providence ("shall we not only accept good from God and not "ra" = "evil, distress, calamity."); 2) He worships:

Job 1:20-22 **20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." 22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.**

1. *Suffering well means that we rest in God's providence*

2. *Suffering well means that we worship God in our suffering*

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.

1PE 3:14 **But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, {you are} blessed. \And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled\,**

a. "Suffer" = $\pi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\chi\omega$

This is the first use of this verb in the epistle. It's a word that we will see several times from this point onward. A characteristic term for t/suffering of X who is sometimes referred to as "The Paschal Lamb"

b. "unjustly" is a key word in verse 19

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

(1) Turn over to chapter Four (vv. 15-16)

{read} ==> Note again "worship God in suffering" from v. 16b.

Brings us to our third and last main point . . .

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

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

III. We have been sovereignly called by God to suffer well

(21a)

<A.> Look at verse 21 ==>

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

<1.> Literally, "You have been called for this" (what?)

<a.> For suffering!

That's the context, isn't it? Why t/verse goes on to say ==>

. . . since Christ also suffered on your behalf leaving for you an example so that you might follow in His steps . . .

<b.> Suffer like He did

He was called to suffer and so are you.

<c.> "Called" = καλεω * Verb: Aorist Passive

Culminative aorist (perfective force). IOW - it's translated like t/perfect tense, "You have been called."

You were called in t/past & that calling is relevant to your life and situation now. That's t/idea.

<(1)> The word "calling" is rich in theological truth

<(a)> There are two kinds of calling in Scripture

See both in 1 Corinthians 1:23-24 ==>

23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Verse 23 is t/general call to salvation (that's t/gospel as it goes out to every ear) - {cite v. 23}

Verse 24 is t/inward or effectual call that goes to t/elect. That's t/Gospel as it goes out to specific hearts resulting in salvation (cite v. 24)

What we call in theology, the "Effectual Calling" of God. That is, when God calls you, that calling is effectual, it's irresistible.

Matthew 22:14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

That call results in faith. We no longer see t/cross as foolishness, but as the power & wisdom of God! We no longer are blind, now we see!

() 1:15; 2:9; 3:9; 5:10

To be called is to be summoned to eternal glory in X, it's to inherit blessing // to be called out of darkness into t/light.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Note the parallel! Paul says that t/same creative act that resulted in t/worlds being formed, bringing light out of darkness, was at work in your heart to bring you out of darkness to see the **light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

<(2)> Now, note this ==>

That same effectual calling that brought you to your knees B4 X also brings you to you knees in suffering.

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

The purpose is to suffer and to do so w/o sin. God not only called you to salvation, but to suffer.

<(a)> Turn to Phil. 1:29

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

<(b)> Turn back to 1 Peter . . .

3:17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

4:19 Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

<(c)> No way of escaping it

Suffering & how you respond to that suffering is a mark of genuine saving faith. That's t/parable of the soils in Matt. 13 - some hear t/word & give some sort of assent to it, but when persecution and affliction come they fall away. Why Peter calls it t/proof of faith in 1:7.

III. We have been sovereignly called by God to suffer well

Actually have 4 sub-points that I want to look at in this regard. These sub-points are answering t/question, "How can we be satisfied with suffering?"

We'll only get through the first this AM.

"How can we be satisfied with suffering?" Number 1 ==>

A. We can be satisfied with suffering because Christ suffered for us (21b)

1. Yes, we are called to suffer

We are ordained (or for you Calvinists out there: elected/predestined to suffer). BUT, that's not the full picture. If it were the full picture, then Xn theology would differ little from Islam in that regard. Islam believes that God ordains all that happens, but their belief is little more than sterile, dry fate. It's impersonal. The God of Islam is capricious. And in that false system of belief there's really no reason or purpose in suffering. In that system, God is a stranger to suffering.

For you have been called for this [purpose], since Christ also suffered on your behalf . . .

2. We have a God who has experienced suffering

As one writer notes:

“A belief in the incarnation means that everything Christ went through and did, God went through and did; otherwise it is a meaningless belief. The one person of Jesus Christ cannot be split in two . . . When Jesus suffered, God experienced suffering. When Jesus was hungry, God experienced hunger and when Jesus experienced death, God experienced death. [Boyd, 58]

That is unique to t/truth. God has entered into and tasted of t/sufferings of men.

a. It was necessary for Jesus Christ to suffer

MAR 8:31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

1PE 1:11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

All of these things were "musts" - "necessary."

As John Piper has noted, Christ's suffering and death is the highest display of the glory of the grace of God. Suffering is an essential part of the created universe in which the greatness of the glory of the grace of God is to be displayed in its fulness.

(1) Suffering exists as part of God's plan, His plan A

He was t/lamb slain before t/foundation of t/world (Revelation 13:8)

Before God created the world he had in view Jesus Christ as slain. The suffering of Jesus was not an afterthought.

The magnitude of the word "slain." only used by John. Christ was slain! σφαζω - to slaughter. It means slaughter, to slit a lamb's throat. It is a violent word. Here we have suffering.

The centerpiece of all worship for all eternity will be Christ, the Lamb slain.

It will never be forgotten. The reminder will remain for all eternity (cf. John 20:25-27).

3. suffering is the means by which we receive our final reward even as it was the means by which Christ received His

The ultimate reason that suffering exists in the universe is that God may display his glory by the suffering of Christ to deliver us from suffering. The suffering of the innocent in our place, to bring us everlasting joy.

This is the connection to why we have to suffer. It was the ordained means for Christ!

By His suffering, Christ "entered into glory"

LUK 24:26 "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"

4. There is a connection between Christ's suffering & ours

ROM 8:17 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.}

2CO 1:5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

PHI 3:10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

1PE 4:13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

2 Corinthians 4:10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

a. Christ's suffering was meritorious

He suffered for us. I would go so far as to say that t/suffering's of X are imputed/credited to us so that when God sees our suffering, he overlays it w/the sufferings of His Son.

Suffering was part of Christ's active obedience for us.

{pause}

We must not say, "Life is not fair." For what do we see when we look upon t/cross? When we look at the cross we see the divine logo of injustice. Not just injustice but also justice & righteousness. The cross forms an intersection where justice and injustice intersect, they cross and the result is God's glory and our hope.

2CO 4:17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

Persevering in suffering . . .

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,

Peter tells us to fix our hope on future grace. In writing about our hope as believers, and the fact that what we hope for is yet future, Spurgeon says, "These . . . subjects of hope . . . are beyond our present experience. Let us not be discouraged about this. Hope must have something to feed on. We cannot have all of heaven and yet remain on earth. My dear believer, if you feel tormented by sin within you and your holiness seems battered and spotted, you can be fully persuaded that He who has promised complete salvation is able to do it.

Do not judge yourself any longer by what you do, what you see, what you feel, or what you are. Rise into the sphere of the things that will be. When there is no joy in the present, you can know that there is infinite joy in the future. Do not say, 'Oh, but that is a long way off.' That is not true. Many of you . . . may be sixty, seventy, or even eighty years old. Your time to be with Christ cannot be far away, for the thread of your life is snapping. Some of us are middle-aged, but . . . our lease will soon run out also. And since so many people are snatched away in their prime, we may at any moment be caught up to the land for which we hope. . . . We will be serving the Lord day and night in His temple and will be gazing on His face with unspeakable joy. Even if some of us should be doomed to exile from heaven for another fifty years, the time will soon fly away.

Let us work to our utmost for the glory of God while we are still here on earth, for the moments slip away. Do you remember this time last year? It seems like it was only the other day. Boys and girls think that a year is a long time, but older folks have a different opinion. The years no longer seem long to us, now that we are growing gray. For me, time travels so fast that its axles are hot with speed. Fear exclaims, 'Oh, for a little breathing room!' But hope answers, 'No, let the years fly away, for then we will be home all the sooner.'

Let us project ourselves into the future. We do not need much dynamite of imagination to send us there. We can leap that little distance by hope and seat ourselves among the thrones above. Resolve, at least for today, that you will not linger in a cloudy earthbound frame of mind, but will mount to the bright, cloudless eternity. Oh, to leave these muddy streams and bathe in the river of hope whose crystal waters flow from the pure foundation of divine joy." [C.H. Spurgeon, Finding Peace in Life's Storms (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997), 28-29]