



1 PETER 3:13-14

PART 3

Suffer for righteousness' sake

READ MATTHEW 5:43-48

INTRODUCTION

We often have a misconception when it comes to suffering. We live in a culture that is obsessed with comfort and entertainment and so, when something happens that causes suffering or anguish, we reject that outwardly and inwardly and run from it as hard as we can. No one thinks that suffering is enjoyable. Even the Bible talks about that in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 11. This passage should be looked at through the correct lens of understanding that “correction” and “suffering” can sometimes be the same thing. No one enjoys it, but it does something for us that is far more important than earthly comfort: Righteousness.

Righteousness is the goal of God in the Christian life. He desires for us to live holy, righteous lives, and to accomplish His will in our lives, we must live differently than the rest of the world. In Matthew, we see Jesus telling the people to not only put up with or be indifferent to enemies but to love them. We are to actively pursue a loving relationship with people who may hate us. This goes against worldly wisdom and practice. Jesus even alludes to the fact that we are to find our “reward” in loving our enemies. We see that through our sacrifice of loving our enemies, we are made righteous and holy in the sight of God. There is something that happens that is more than we could ever imagine.

In 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 we see Paul describing the transformation that takes place when we start loving our enemies and pursuing the righteousness that Peter talks about. We see that our outward man struggles but our inward man gets renewed day by day and that “light affliction which is but for a moment” works in us something that is incomparable to what we define as “comfort”. We often live in a state of panic when we come under any form of suffering and yet, we see that our response should be one of joy that Christ has counted us worthy of suffering for His name. It only is suffering in His name when we are following Him and obeying His commands however.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you find yourself running away from trials? Suffering? Enemies? Why? How can you better respond to these events in your life to shed the light and love of Jesus to the world?
2. Read Hebrews 12:11. What do you think the writer is trying to encourage here? What type of living are we to experience through Christ? How does that change our perspective on suffering?
3. How is righteousness defined in the Bible? How does living a righteous life propel us towards God? How does it require change? Why is it important that we desire holiness above comfort?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Why is it so easy to lose heart when our outward man perishes? What is required of us to be renewed day by day? (Romans 12:1-2)
5. What are some ways that you can remind yourself in the heat of a trial that God is working something in you that far outweighs the burdens of this world and is working something in eternity that is amazing?

WRAP UP

God knows that we struggle with trials and temptations. He understands that we don't always react perfectly to every situation. We have that grace to learn. The important thing is that we learn and change according to what Christ desires. Our desire is to become more like Him and that requires sacrifice and, sometimes, pain. It is worth it on the day of glory when we will enter into our rest and experience Him and His kingdom.