

## **“PARTAKERS OF CHRIST’S SUFFERINGS,” #2**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In a previous lesson, we studied about the sufferings of Christ while on earth, in that He was mocked, spat upon, and crucified in a horrible manner, with His body pierced by Roman soldiers. We observed that God willed that His son be put to death in this manner, and that He did it to atone for our sins, and to fulfill scripture. Also, He did it as a necessary step to enter into glory with the Father, and to leave us a good example to follow in life.

In this lesson, we shall look at some ways **how** and **why** Christians are called upon to suffer in this life.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **I. 1<sup>st</sup> of all, Christians do NOT SUFFER AS EVIL DOERS SUFFER.**

A. Evil doers suffer many times because of their evil deeds, or sins.

1. Some spend their time and energy in the pleasures of sin, such as the sins of fornication, drunkenness, gambling, murder, cursing, lying “and such like.” Gal. 5:19-21
2. They like to rebel against God, and think Christians are “strange” for not doing what they are doing. 1 Pet. 4:1-4
3. They have no respect for the word of God which defines good and evil, and the eternal consequences OF their sins. Gal.6:7-8
4. They often suffer at the death of their loved ones, because they have no hope of eternal life. 1 Thess. 4:13

B. Christians are admonished **not** to suffer in this manner. 1 Pet. 4:14-15

#### **II. 2<sup>nd</sup>, why then DO CHRISTIANS HAVE TO SUFFER?**

A. Just because Christians have been saved and have the hope of heaven, does not mean that we are immune from problems, persecution and suffering in this life on earth.

1. The Lord promised blessings on those who suffer for righteousness’ sake. Matt.5:10-12
2. Suffering and persecution are inevitable for devout Christians. 2 Tim.3:12; 1 Pet. 4:3-4; 16
3. Suffering and persecution can be character building and make us stronger in the faith. Jas. 1:2-4; Psa. 119:67, 71
4. Suffering at the loss of a Christian in death is lessened and comforting by the hopes of meeting again in the resurrection. 1 Thess. 4:13, 18

B. Many Christians are persecuted with **words** by enemies of God and the Bible. Matt. 5:11; 1 Pet. 4:3-4

1. If we speak against the practice of just “living together” instead of getting married, we are spoken against.
2. If we speak against homosexuality and so-called “same sex marriages”, we are denounced by many in the world, even some in the brotherhood.
  - a. Abilene Christian University has been conducting seminars to encourage a friendly relationship between the “straight” and the “gays.”
  - b. Lipscomb University (formerly a Christian College) recently allowed students to celebrate a “National Coming Out Day” on Oct. 18, 2018, to honor those who “came out of the closet” to practice homosexuality.

3. To stand up for the truth of the gospel regarding how to be saved, brings immediate criticism from many people, as being narrow minded and hair-splitters.
4. To stand by the New Testament teaching of “one body (church)” against denominations being accepted of God, is to bring immediate criticism and opposition; and even some brethren say we should not bother denominations, but spend our time searching out the “lost.”
5. Sometimes even “false brethren” will oppose some in the church who want to stand by the word of God in Christian living. 2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 2:4
6. Finally, many have been **persecuted to death** for faith in God.
  - a. God’s people are encouraged to be faithful even to the point of dying for their faith if necessary. Matt.10:28; Rev. 2:10
  - b. Some early believers were killed because of their faith. Acts 7:51-60; 12:1-5; Rev. 2:13
  - c. History reveals that Nero, a wicked first emperor of Rome in the first century, would sometimes light up his gardens at night with the bodies of Christians who were put to death because they would not renounce Christ and acknowledge Caesar as god.

#### **CONCLUSION**

I. Charles Tillman penned the words of a popular hymn.

*Ready to suffer, grief or pain, Ready to stand the test; Ready to stay at home and send Others if He sees best. Ready to go, prepared to bear, Ready to watch and pray; Ready to stand aside and give, till He shall clear the way. Ready to speak, alert to warn, Ready His way to learn; Ready in life, no fear of death, Ready for His return.*

A. We partake of Christ’s suffering by enjoying the blessings that His suffering brought to us. Rom. 8:17-18 (Note: “suffer with him” equivalent to “partakers of Christ’s sufferings.”)

1. The words for “suffer” and forms of it are found numerous times in the New Testament.
2. The word “suffer” in some form is associated with “adversity, persecution, distress and tribulations.”

B. But, only when we have to suffer for His name that we are **really** partaking of His suffering, as we suffer “with” Him, which will bring great joy in the end.

1 Pet. 4:13

II. Being ready to endure persecution means becoming a Christian, and growing stronger in the faith. 1 Cor. 15:58

DON TARBET