

Suffering For Christ

Introduction

1. We are called not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for Him. (Philp. 1:29; 1 Peter 2:21)
2. We Christians in America find it easy to believe, but hard to suffer.
3. It is the will of God to suffer for being faithful. (1 Peter 3:17; 4:19)
4. We should desire to be associated with Christ's sufferings (Philp 3:10)

Jesus Forewarned Us Of Our Suffering For Him

1. If they persecuted Jesus, they'll persecute His followers. (Jn. 15:18-25; Jn. 16:1-4)
 - a. We suffer because our values and standards are not only different, but are in direct conflict with the unrighteous ways of their corrupt society. We set our minds on things above not on things of this earth. (Col. 3:1-2)
 - b. Even so-called professed believers and churches that do not adhere to Jesus' teachings or to separate from the corrupt system of society will view killing you as a service to God.
2. Even your own family will rise up against you because of Jesus. (Mt. 10:16-39)
3. If we live godly in Christ we will suffer. (2 Tim 3:12-13; 1 Jn 3:11-13)
 - a. Because of our godly standards we will suffer ridicule. We will grieve at seeing godliness rejected by our culture as a whole.
 - b. Ask yourself:
 1. Have I suffered persecution because of my commitment to live godly?
 2. Is my lack of suffering a sign that I have not stood firmly for godliness?

Will All Professed Christians Endure Suffering For Christ

1. Some receive the gospel with joy, but when suffering comes they trip and fall from the faith. (Mt 13:20-21)
2. Some will be ashamed of Jesus and His words, and Jesus likewise with them. (Mk 8:38)
3. If we deny Him before men, He will deny us before the Father in heaven. (Mt 13:32-33; 2 Tim 2:11-13)
 - a. We must beware of the temptation to compromise God's will in order to avoid shame, embarrassment or loss.

How Should We Respond to Persecution

1. We should rejoice and leap for joy! (Lk 6:22-23) Be exceedingly glad! (Mt 5:10-11)
 - a. The apostles rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ. (Acts 5:40-42)
 - b. How joyful have you been or how high have you leapt when you are being hated, rejected or slandered?
2. We know that God's Spirit and glory is upon us. (1 Peter 4:12-16)
3. If we suffer with Christ we will be gloried with Him. (Rom 8:17-18)
4. We should be delighted, knowing that in weakness we are made strong. (2 Cor 12:9-10)

5. We need to love, bless, do good and pray for our persecutors. (Mt 5:38-48)

What Are Our Rewards For Suffering

1. A greater glory awaits. (2 Cor 4:17, 1 Cor 2:9)
2. Jesus is revealed in us. (2 Cor 4:11)
3. Comfort in Christ (2 Cor 1:4-7)
4. We shall reign with Christ! (2 Tim 2:12)
5. Plus points 2-4 in 'How Should We Respond To Persecution'.

Conclusion

1. Jesus told us to expect persecution. So if we are persecuted for Christ at work, at home, at play or even at church we should not be surprised. We think that Christian values in the States are strong, but the sad fact is that this nation is far from being godly, therefore do not be shocked when you are persecuted. It should be expected if you are living godly in Christ Jesus.
2. Many you know or who have been pillars in the church are not immune to being ashamed of Christ and openly or secretly deny Him. So beware of putting other believers up on a pedestal for once they are there the only place they can go is down. Make Jesus the source and strength of your life, not man.
3. Remember to leap for joy when your family and friends come against you for Christ's sake. It is not time for a pity party. Get up child, for great is your reward! Don't think that this is strange and that you are alone. There is nothing new under the sun! It is common to believers to have family and friends come against you. Now is the time to show them the Christ in you, the hope of glory!
4. Just set your eyes, your goal on the author and finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. Set your sights on the eternal, which will be far beyond our wildest dreams!