



No healthy Christian ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not.

— Oswald Chambers —

AZ QUOTES

**Old Testament Reading – Psalm 73:1-28 – New Testament Reading –
Hebrews 12:1-11**

How Should We Then Live “Suffering for God’s Glory” 1 Peter 4:1-11

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At the time the Apostle Peter wrote this letter, which was about 30-years after the resurrection of Christ, Christianity was spreading so rapidly it was becoming a threat to the Roman government, as well as to the Jewish Religious leaders.

- The Romans were polytheistic – they believed there were many gods, and that all gods were equal.
- The Christians were monotheistic – there is only one God, and He is sovereign overall.
- When the Christians refused to worship the false gods, or bow before the Roman Emperor as god, they were accused of undermining the authority of the Roman government, and the order was given to persecute them to squelch their rebellion.
- To escape the persecution, many Christians fled to the remote provinces of Rome, only to face the same level of suffering they had endured before.
- When they asked Peter how they were to respond to such persecution, he told them, *“To this suffering you were called, because Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps.”* (2:21)
- The call to endure suffering is to every Christian of every era, and it appears such persecution is now upon us.

In 2 Timothy 3:12, the Apostle Paul wrote, *“All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”*

- The fact that Christians in the West have not suffered such persecution as Christians in many other parts of the world indicates:
 - Not only are we not as serious as they are about being the salt of the earth and the light of the world.
 - Not only are we not as dedicated as they are about exposing the works of evil, and seeing people set free from their sins.
 - Not only are we not as committed as they are about reaching the unreached with the gospel.
 - But for the last 50-years, Christians in the West have been told, if we suffer, it is due to our lack of faith in God, or the consequence of a sin we will not confess, for the Christian life is one of success, not suffering.
- The fastest growing church in the world today is in Iran.
 - According to Frontier Alliance International, multitudes of Muslims have turned from Islam and embraced Christianity.
 - The Christian Church in Iran is without buildings, property, or core leadership, but the body of believers continues to grow. When asked why, they responded:

“Converts run from persecution, but disciples are willing to forsake the world and cling to Jesus, even if they have to die for Him.”

Authoritarian governments have always viewed true Christianity as a threat to their perceived power, which is why they are suspicious of anything other than a state-approved religion.

- For the last 50-years, Christianity in the West has embraced the culture, which is why our witness to the world is so ineffective.
- Cultural Christianity is a religion of self-righteousness and good works, without any evidence of a personal relationship with God.
- Cultural Christians are those who “hang around” the Vine, but they give no evidence of being “attached” to Him.
- A true Christian is one who has received Jesus Christ as their Savior and submitted unto Him as their Lord, and their faith is manifested by their “changed life” – a new commitment to live each day by the moral values Jesus defined, in the anticipation of the imminent rapture of the Church, and in the promise of His soon return to this earth.

“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

Luke 9:23

- To obtain our salvation, Jesus denied His deity, allowed Himself to be crucified, and gave His life as a ransom for our sins.
- To receive His gift of salvation, Jesus asks us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, *not to die for our sins, but to die to ourselves and to sin*, and be willing to die for Him, if necessary, to prove our faith in Him.
- The more serious we are about our faith in Christ, the more persecution we will suffer from those who do not believe in Him, as well as from cultural Christians who are convicted by the seriousness of our faith.

**“But even if you should suffer for righteousness,
you will be blessed. So have no fear of them,
nor be troubled.”**

1 Peter 3:14

1. Live Each Day with the Mind of Christ – 1 Peter

4:1- “Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind.”

As Christians, we are the chosen-children of God. However, if we are to face the world with the mind of Christ, we must remove the robe of royalty, clothe ourselves in humility, and become servants to those who use us and abuse us, for that is what Christ did for us.

- While He did not renounce His deity, He laid it aside so He could suffer and die as a man for the sins of all men.
- Even though He lived a pure and righteous life, He still suffered persecution for it.
- Peter said, Christians are to do the same – not wasting our lives in the lust of the flesh, or trying to avoid suffering.
- Rather, we are to live each day according to the will of God, even if that includes being persecuted for our faith.
- To achieve that level of righteousness, we must change our attitude toward sin, for our sins are not just moral mistakes, they are acts of rebellion against the sovereignty of God.

If we are to arm ourselves with the mind of Christ, we must view every opportunity to sin:

- Through the heart of God – *“Against Thee only have I sinned.”* – Psalm 51:4
- Through the suffering of Christ – *“Christ suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust.”* – 1 Peter 3:18
- Through the suffering of others – *“We have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles.”* – 1 Peter 4:3

2. Live Each Day in Anticipation of Christ – 1 Peter 4:7 – “The end of all things is at hand: therefore, be serious and watchful in your prayers.”

- Live seriously– Vs. 7 – *“The end of all things is at hand, therefore, be serious.”*
 - If we truly believed the rapture of the Church could happen today, we would get serious about living lives of holiness.
- Live prayerfully – Vs. 7 – *“Be serious and watchful in your prayers.”*
 - If we truly believed the rapture of the Church was near, we would be much more serious about our prayer life.
- Live Lovingly – Vs. 8 – *“Above all things, have fervent love for one another.”*
 - If we truly believed we were about to stand face to face with Jesus, we would get serious about our love for one another.
- Live Hospitably – Vs. 9 – *“Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.”*
 - If we truly believed the Lord was about to call us to *“Come up hither,”* we would get serious about opening our hearts and our homes to others – even strangers.
- Live Graciously – Vs. 10 – *“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*
 - If we truly believed we were going to give account of our lives unto the Lord we would get serious about discovering our spiritual gift, and make sure we were using it to edify the Church.

“That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”
1 Peter 4:11