



**Old Testament Reading – Genesis 3:1-19 – New Testament Reading – 2
Corinthians 11:16-30**

How Should We Then Live “Suffering for God’s Glory” # 2 1 Peter 4:12-19

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Peter’s epistle was written to the “*pilgrims of the dispersion*,” those first-century Christians who relocated to the remote areas of the Roman Empire to escape the severe persecution unleashed by the Roman Emperor, Nero.

- Nero had intentionally burned down the wooden apartment buildings to achieve his egotistical goal of constructing a more impressive city.
- When the citizens of Rome discovered what Nero had done, they rose up against him, and their resentment was deadly.

- To divert attention away from himself, Nero blamed the Christians who were already targets of slander because they would not bow before Caesar or worship the false gods.
- While the charges against them were anarchy, arson, and atheism, within a few years, thousands of Christians were martyred for their expressed faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

However, “the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church,” as the gospel spread throughout the Roman Empire.

- By 325AD, over 2-million Christians had been murdered, but another 7-million had received Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- While the apostolic preaching of the gospel was the initial source of the New Testament Church, it was the loyalty of those who believed the gospel that was responsible for the continued growth of the Church, and the willingness of those believers to endure persecution, including their unjust death, to prove their faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- The martyrdom of so many not only created a new respect for those who were slanderously called “Christians,” but it also created a new interest in the message of the gospel.
- The Apostle Peter and his wife were crucified in 64AD, just after the massive fire, but some 255-years later, a new Roman Emperor, Constantine, built the building that would become St. Peter’s Cathedral; the tomb over the grave in which some historians believe Peter is buried.

So, the epistle of Peter was written in 64AD during Emperor Nero’s ruthless persecution of Christians.

- Peter knew these beleaguered believers needed food, clothing, and shelter, but they also needed peace, hope, and words of encouragement.
- However, rather than pity them, Peter reminded them of who they were and whose they were and that those who were persecuting them could do nothing to change that.
- Peter then told them the suffering they were experiencing was to reveal the authenticity of their faith so when they met Jesus face-to-face, their faith in Him might be worthy of praise, honor, and glory.
- The theme of Peter’s 1st epistle is to encourage Christians who suffer persecution to remain steadfast in their faith:

“Out of more than 2-billion Christians worldwide, over 340-million live in areas where they face the possibility of persecution daily. Yet, within those same areas, the gospel is being proclaimed, and the Body of Christ is growing!”

1. Christians Should Expect Persecution – 12 – “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.”

- The English word “persecution” is translated from a Greek word that means “pursue” or “chase after.”
- All the Old Testament Saints were harassed because of their righteousness.
- All the Old Testament prophets were badgered because they spoke for God.
- The eleventh chapter of Hebrews offers some examples of how God’s people in the days of the Old Testament were treated because of their expressed faith in Him.
- Likewise, in the days of the New Testament as Satan’s seed pursued Jesus’ followers to do them harm.
- In Matthew 24:9, Jesus said, in the last days, people would persecute Christians simply because they belonged to Him.

The persecution of God’s people is the physical display of the spiritual battle between God and Satan over who rules the world.

- In Genesis 3:14-15, God put “enmity” between:
 - Satan’s seed (small s, plural) – a future family
 - Eve’s Seed (capital S, singular) – the Messiah, Jesus
- In John 8:37ff, Jesus told the Scribes and Pharisees who hounded Him daily, *“You are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.”*
- Satan’s seeds are those who rebel against God and persecute those who belong to God. Therefore, as the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 6:10-12, we do not wrestle with mere men, but against the seed of Satan, *“against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age; against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.”*

2. Christians Should Rejoice When Persecuted – Vs. 13 – “Rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

- If we are being persecuted for our righteousness, that is the proof that we belong to the Kingdom of God. Matthew 5:10-12
- To the degree that we share in the sufferings of Christ, we shall also share in His glory when He returns to the earth.
- Every evil deed done to those who love Jesus is really meant for Him, for they hate Him, and when they see Christ in us, they hate us because they hate Him.

- In Galatians 6:17, the Apostle Paul said, *“From now on, let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.”*
- In Luke 6:22, Jesus said, *“Blessed are you when men hate you, be glad in that day, and leap, for behold your reward is great in heaven.”*

3. Christians Are Glorified by the Holy Spirit when they are persecuted – Vs. 14 – “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”

- When Christians are persecuted for their righteousness:
 - Those who carry out the persecution blaspheme God. They are damned to hell, and that without remedy.
 - Those who receive the persecution glorify God and are glorified by God to dwell with Him forever.
- When Christians are persecuted for their unrighteousness, there is no glory in their suffering, and they forfeit the blessings of God.

4. Christians are to Accept Persecution as the Purifying Judgment of God – Vs. 17-19 – “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”

- The word “judgment” in this verse means to chasten, to purge, to purify, and the term “house of God” means the Church, the “called out and assembled.”
- God uses the expressed evil of those in positions of power to chasten His children, to purge the Church of false believers, and to purify the Church in preparation for the Rapture.
- God’s judgment began in the 2nd chapter of Acts, with the birth of the Church, and it will not end until Revelation 20, at the Great White Throne Judgment.
- If God allows His children to suffer persecution to purge us of our sins and to perfect our faith in Him, what kind of suffering awaits an ungodly person who has never confessed their sin or asked God for His forgiveness?