



The New Testament and the **Suffering of the Saints** especially in the **First Letter of Peter**



Dr. Chris Alan Foreman

1. The Bible connects SIN and SUFFERING and DEATH.

- a. In the Old Testament there is a direct link. See Genesis, Chapter 3. The great counter example of innocent suffering is Job.
- b. In the New Testament the connection is indirect. Christ is the preeminent example of the innocent sufferer. He is the wounded healer, the suffering servant.

2. The Christian understanding of suffering centers on the Cross. “The Son of God suffered unto the death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might be like His”. George MacDonald.

3. How is the word “suffering” used in New Testament Greek?

θλιψις – thlipsis -- trouble, tribulation, distress, persecution [impersonal]

And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great **tribulation**; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [Revelation 4:17]

Trouble should be avoided. You should flee from it.

πειρασμός – peirasmos – trial, test, ordeal [personal]

Blessed is the man who perseveres under **trial**, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. [James 1:12]

A trial should be endured. It may be a testing of faith.

πάσχω – pascho – suffering, pain, passion

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must **suffer** many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. [Mark 8:31]

Suffering should be endured. You identify with Jesus.

νόσος [nosos] – disease | **μαλακία** [malakia] – infirmity | **ἀσθένεια** [astheneia] weakness

Also “cleanse lepers” and “cast out demons”

We should not endure sickness, but confront it. We must pray for healing.

4. When you suffer pain as a Christian, don't run from God, but pray to Him. Your suffering may require healing for relief, wisdom for resolution, fortitude for acceptance, or repentance for folly

5. The basic theme of First Peter is the proper response to Christian suffering.

Knowing that his readers would be facing more persecution than ever before, Peter wrote this letter to give them a divine perspective on these trials so that they would be able to endure them without wavering in their faith. They should not be surprised at their ordeal because the One they follow also suffered and died. Rather, they should count it a privilege to share the sufferings of Christ.

6. What is the purpose of suffering?

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith-- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. [1 Peter 1:6-7]

7. Do all Christians suffer?

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. [1 Peter 4:12 & 13]

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. [1 Peter 5:9]

8. What should be my response to suffering?

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good. [1 Peter 4:19]

9. Who is our example in suffering?

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. [1 Peter 2:21-23]

10. The witness of James, the half-brother of Jesus

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. [James 1:2-3]

11. The witness of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. [Romans 5:3-4]

12. The witness of Jesus Himself

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. [John 16:33]

13. What words does a true saint receive when he asks God why he is suffering?

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. [2 Corinthians 9:7-9].