

A Suffering People

Key Verse:
“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”
—I Peter 4:19

Selected Scripture:
I Peter 4

appearance of impropriety. Such a transformation of character will be viewed by former associates as strange, and they will cease their desires to have worldly fellowship with us.—I Pet. 4:1-4

Peter exhorts believers to appreciate God's dealings with them according to their spiritual life and endeavors, as opposed to mankind who make judgments about the church according to outside and fleshly appearances because they are unable to distinguish New Creatures from other individuals in the world. The consecrated are admonished to sobriety and watchfulness with regard to their conduct, especially since present arrangements under the dominion of Satan will soon give way to the establishment of a righteous Kingdom.

Peter also stresses the need for believers to manifest such character traits as love, forgiveness, hospitality,

AS CHRIST SUFFERED UN-
justly while he was in the flesh, his followers should also be prepared to endure persecution in the Master's cause. After conversion from sin to righteousness, the believer's words, deeds, affections, and judgments are changed. Additionally, not only is he careful to avoid acts of gross wickedness, but also those things that might lead to sin or even have the ap-

and service towards others. The duties of Christian citizenship should focus upon glorifying our Heavenly Father through obedience to his principles set forth in scripture.—vss. 6-11

An important understanding for believers is the realization that suffering for Christ's sake should be considered as a normal experience, and we should not expect to have better treatment than the Master received during his earthly sojourn.—vs. 12

Properly understood, suffering for righteousness should be a cause of joy for the followers of Christ and taken as evidence of our obedience and faithfulness to his cause. Christians should never be guilty of wrong doing or take pleasure in being persecuted because of folly on their part. "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."—vs. 15

Not only is suffering for Christ's sake deemed to be anything for which we should be ashamed, but it is a requirement for all who will comprise the body of Christ. "Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."—I Pet. 2:21

When we consider the example Christ left for us as his footstep followers to emulate his course of faithfulness in the face of all opposition, we should not expect to enter into the kingdom glories on flowery beds of ease. "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."—I Pet. 4:16

Our Key Verse assures us that suffering endured according to the will of God is the pathway for the believer's eternal glory. "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us."—II Tim. 2:10-12 ■