

Suffer It To Be So

“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

THESE WORDS WRITTEN by the Apostle Peter emphasize the total commitment necessary when difficult experiences have been allowed by our loving Heavenly Father to test his consecrated people. Our faithful Master exemplified this high degree of commitment during the last moments of his perfect human life. “Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.’”—Luke 23:46, *New American Standard Bible*

NEWNESS OF LIFE

In our featured scripture, Peter emphasizes that when we experience severe trials we must look to our Lord for his promised help and guidance in our consecrated walk in newness of life. The apostle used the word ‘soul’ instead of spirit, or breath of life. The soul represents our entire being, and we are to consume this gradually in the service of God even as Jesus did. He committed his spirit and his will to his Heavenly Father.

Our spiritual life comes from God, who is the “author and finisher of our faith.” (Heb. 12:2)

Through the Prophet Isaiah, God said concerning our Lord Jesus, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."—Isa. 53:12

CONSECRATION

At the time of consecration, we made a commitment to God to present our lives to him in sacrifice. The Apostle Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."—Rom. 12:1,2

We promised to solemnly do the will of our loving Heavenly Father. We do this moment by moment. Each day we must pay our vows by striving to know and do his will as each experience is permitted to come our way. Committing ourselves suggests putting all matters into God's hands, especially when it involves severe trials. Even when there is no suffering involved, it is our privilege and duty to commit our life unto him. The psalmist wrote, "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."—Ps. 37:5,6

When we suffer according to the will of God, we should commit our life to him. Suffering is an occasion of special trial and a time of special need of God's help. Yet, we may forget this important fact and that God is supervising our every experience. We need to apply the "exceeding great and precious promises" to ourselves. (II Pet. 1:4) Peter's advice is of particular value, and if followed will give us divine help when we need it most. In any particular time of suffering, we should look to God. Instead of murmuring and rebelling, we should say, even as Jesus did, "Not my will, but thine, be done."—Luke. 22:42

CHASTENING NECESSARY

When a particularly severe experience comes our way, we should not be discouraged, but ask God for his help as soon as possible. We should also attempt to view the matter from his standpoint and learn the necessary lesson. We are called upon to suffer with Christ, and it is a major part of our Christian experience as we walk in newness of life. Paul acknowledged, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. 12:11) God knows our frame, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."—Ps. 103:13,14

A NEW CREATION

In our featured scripture, Peter used the word 'Creator' instead of God. Every true New Creature is in the process of being created, as Paul explained,

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” (II Cor. 5:17) We are God’s workmanship and his work is accomplished in our mind and character. “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”—II Cor. 4:6,7

If we continue faithful unto death, we will receive a divine body and will be fashioned like unto Christ, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”—Phil. 3:21

LEARNING OBEDIENCE

In his letter to the Hebrew brethren, Paul wrote concerning our Lord Jesus, and said, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” (Heb. 5:8,9) Thus he could not become complete as a glorified New Creature in his future kingdom until he had proven loyal to his Heavenly Father under adverse conditions of severe trial and suffering. Even though he was the only begotten Son of God, he had to endure these experiences before he could be a faithful Son on the divine plane of being.

His followers, who are “children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3), must also suffer with him if they would be glorified together with him. Suffering is an indispensable part of the creative process.

“This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”—I John 5:3-5

The test becomes severe when doing God’s will involves suffering. At such times, we should commit ourselves to our faithful Creator. Our part is to submit our wills to God, and his part is to direct the issue. We are to remember, “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (I Cor. 10:13) Asking God for his help proves that we are sympathetic with his will as it pertains to our consecrated life. We want to please him even though the flesh is weak. We accept the experience and learn obedience. With such an attitude of mind, our faithful Creator will give us the help needed. Committing ourselves to him at such times strengthens the New Creature.

SUFFERING IN JESUS

The word ‘suffer,’ as used by the Apostle Peter in our featured scripture, suggests experiencing something that is usually painful to our physical bodies. He admonished that we suffer according to the will of God. This means that the experience has come to us by God’s providence and that we are endeavoring to endure it in a way that pleases him. Suffering for wrongdoing is not counted as suffering with Christ. “What glory is it, if, when ye be

buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”—I Pet. 2:20,21

Glory comes only when we voluntarily suffer for doing right in the same way that Jesus did. This is to the glory of God. During this present Gospel Age, it means doing more than what will be required of perfect beings on the human plane under the administration of Christ’s future kingdom. Taking the buffeting for our faults patiently is helpful if we try to correct our faults. Peter again emphasizes, “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”—Heb. 12:7

Let us therefore endure these necessary corrections while actively letting our light shine and living a life of righteous action. Whatever opposition this brings will be to the glory of God. “This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.”—I Pet. 2:19

Concerning Jesus, the apostle said, “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” (vs. 23) He was our perfect example. (vs. 21) No one should have to suffer for well doing, but those who are being created for the divine plane during this present Gospel Age are required to endure suffering for righteousness, and they learn obedience in this manner. By doing so, they prove that they have an exceptional degree of love for God and a desire to

become like Jesus. As Jesus committed his cause to God, so also do they commit themselves unto their faithful Creator.

OLD AND NEW NATURES

We are told that Jesus' walk of faith and obedience is also an example for us to follow. When we are reviled, we are not to revile again. We are not to return evil for evil, but are to suffer such things and commit our cause to him that judges righteously. This course is contrary to the fallen human nature which continually urges that we should retaliate. This is a constant struggle between the old human nature and the New Creature in Christ Jesus.

We should oppose the old nature and strengthen the new. This will require a determined effort to follow the example of Jesus in each experience that may come upon us. We are to remember that God will avenge all unrighteousness in his own time and way. In his letter to the brethren at Rome, the Apostle Paul admonished, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."—Rom. 12:17-19

SUBMITTING TO GOD'S WILL

The word suffer is also used in the sense of permitting or letting matters be as they are. Concerning this aspect of suffering with Christ, we read, "Jesus answering said unto him [John], Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all

righteousness. Then he suffered him.” (Matt. 3:15) There were, no doubt, many times during Jesus’ earthly ministry, when he was being reviled, that he could have taken matters into his own hands and retaliated. Instead, however, he chose to ‘suffer it to be so.’ When he was taken to be crucified, he explained that he could call for twelve legions of angels to help him. He could have prevented his capture and the terrible death that he faced. Yet, he did not do this, but willingly suffered his enemies to take his life because he knew that it was the will of his loving Heavenly Father. Had he not submitted to the Father’s will the Scriptures would not have been fulfilled concerning the salvation of the sin-sick human family.

Jesus, as a perfect human being, could have done much reform work at the First Advent. Even imperfect people with strong wills have accomplished great things at various times. If Jesus had devoted himself to worldly pursuits, he could have made a great name for himself as a human being; but such a course would not permanently solve the problems of humanity. Jesus knew God’s long-range plan which required the sacrifice of his humanity. He believed in this plan, and was determined to faithfully complete his ministry on behalf of the sin-sick and dying human family. He refused to be swerved from this singleness of purpose by any halfway measures. God’s plan was more difficult, in that it required costly sacrifice.

The faithful followers of Christ must also suffer conditions to be as they are in this present evil world. They may be tempted by the natural desire to reform the world and make it a better place in

which to live. However, such noble desires must be curbed by remembering that, under the administration of Christ's future kingdom, all unrighteousness will be dealt with. With few exceptions, we must suffer present conditions to be as they are and await the will of God to be manifest. This course will be misunderstood by the great majority who do not know, or believe, God's plan for the restitution of all things during the future kingdom. The true Christian may be reviled as he gives his reasons for the hope that is in him. He may be thought foolish. Whatever the result, he will suffer it to be so, and by committing himself to his faithful Creator.

Even in the simple everyday vexing trials, the Christian is helped by suffering things to be as they are. Developing and maintaining the attitude of suffering unpleasant things to be as they are will help us to endure even more severe sufferings when they come to us. In this evil world, there are so many things which annoy us. We can do very little in the way of changing things, but we can help ourselves by remembering that God will change conditions soon. We prove our faith in his plan by suffering things to be as they are. We fight our tendencies by applying the promises, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."—Rom. 8:28

SUFFER IT TO BE SO

Let us continue to be faithful in carrying out the Apostle Peter's advice in our featured scripture. By doing so we will receive the necessary strength to

do the will of our Heavenly Father until the old nature of our humanity is entirely consumed on the altar of sacrifice. “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 Pet. 4:19 ■