

Suffering for Righteousness

Key Verse: *"If you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled."*
—*I Peter 3:14, New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
I Peter 3:8-18

bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." (Acts 9:15,16, NASB) Paul did suffer much in labors for Christ, in beatings, stonings, imprisonments, shipwrecks, robbers, and betrayals by false brethren.—II Cor. 11:23-33

Although we may not suffer to the same degree as Paul and other martyrs of Christ, suffering for righteousness is our lot as well. "To you it has been granted for Christ' sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Phil. 1:29, NASB) Christian suffering is not a burden but a blessing. The word "granted" in the

OUR KEY VERSE PRESENTS us with assuring comfort and a pragmatic challenge. The assurance is that we are blessed when suffering for righteousness' sake. The challenge is in dealing with the fear associated with suffering. Suffering is integral to the Christian life. Its purpose is to help us grow up into Christ. Recall the Lord's words to Ananias who would introduce Saul, soon to be Paul, to the Christian faith. "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to

foregoing scripture means in the original Greek “to grant as a favor, that is, gratuitously, in kindness.” In this sense Christ’s apostles, after being beaten by order of Israel’s religious leaders, “went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” (Acts 5:41,42, *NASB*) As a point of emphasis, we note that their rejoicing was due to being considered worthy of the privilege to suffer for Jesus. This is a perspective that we, as Christians today, must hold to also.

What about the fear of suffering? No one wants to suffer pain, torture, distress or death. To desire such would be abnormal. How may we overcome this fear? The answer is love—a deep love for God, love for Christ, love of righteousness, love of our brethren and even love for our enemies. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”—I John 4:18, *NASB*

Our lesson consoles and advises us, “Even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” (I Pet. 3:14,15, *NASB*) Sanctifying Christ as Lord in our hearts fortifies us to endure righteous suffering. With his spirit in us we may gently and reverently give account for our hope.

The treasured 23rd Psalm assures us that God “restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” (Ps. 23:3,4, *NASB*) This assurance fortifies us as we suffer for righteousness. ■