

Christian Response to Suffering and Persecution

Why this topic is so important as a Christian

Our Unique Calling

The Scripture makes it very plain that Christians are subject to all the causes of suffering common to men, plus the added persecution that comes with taking a clear stand for Christ.

There are some important references in the Bible:

- "...everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12).

"to this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his step" (1 Peter 2:21)

- "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.... For they do not know the one who sent me" (John 15:18-21)
- ".... In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God" (John 16:2b).

Why Christians are Persecuted

- We are no longer identified with the world.
- Second reason why the world rejects Christians is that we are identified with Christ.
- A third reason why the world rejects Christians is they have no identity with God and are ignorant of God.

Common Misconceptions about Suffering

- Suffering is Punishment for Sin
- Sufferers should not be sad or sorrowful
- Suffering comes to the holiest Christians
- Suffering is glamorous
- Persecution should be feared
- Suffering is a mark of defeat

What the Bible says about suffering

- Christian will suffer
- God allows suffering
- Suffering is the will of God has meaning and purpose
- We are not to suffer for evil deeds
- There is blessing in suffering for what is right
- Suffering points to the glory of heaven
- Sufferers share in the suffering of Jesus
- There can be victory in suffering

Biblical responses to Suffering and Persecution

- Don't be surprised: (1 Peter 4:12-13)
- Rejoice in suffering (4:13)
- Don't be ashamed of suffering
- Respond to suffering as Christ did
- Trust God
- Stand firm and stand together

VICTORY in Suffering

- Suffering is the very heart of the Gospel. Without the crucifixion there can be no resurrection.
- This resurrection power He now makes available to you and me, But resurrection always follows the cross.

Paul Estabrooks says: "Accepting persecution is the secret of our victory rather than the absence of trouble or the presence of prosperity and affluence."

Who are strong and servant Christian soldier

- They are like nails. The harder you hid them, the deeper they go
- They are like rubber balls. The harder you throw them down on the floor, the higher they rebound
- They are like flowers. The more you crush them, the stronger the fragrance
- They are like tea bags. When they are put in hot water then you will know how strong they are

Why God allows suffering and persecution to believers/church

- God uses problems and persecution to direct you
- God uses problems and persecution to inspect you
- God uses problems and persecution to correct you
- God uses problems and persecution to protect you
- God uses problems and persecutions to perfect you

Some more Reasons

- To Prove and purify our faith
- To burn away pride
- To make our lives more holy
- To contribute to the spiritual strength of others
- To accomplish purposes unknown to us now
- To bring us together in unity
- To bring about a greater harvest of souls

Negative response

- Renounce their faith and join hands with the enemy
- Totally hide their faith and go into Isolation
- In despair, strike out in open rebellion
- Retaliation/fighting
- Flee (thinking it is the only option)

Biblical Response to Suffering and persecution

Two examples

- How did the Lord respond?
- How did the early church respond

Early Church and Apostles' Response

- They Stayed and Endured
- By Hiding
- By Boldly Being Salt and Light
- By Responding with Non-Violence
- By giving their lives
- They exercised Their Legal Privileges

Suggested Response For Pakistani church

- Discipleship cost
- We should stay and endure
- Flee if that is the last option

Spiritually

- Love your enemies
- Pray for Forgiveness to our enemies
- Faith in God
- Overcome on evil by good Rom 12:12
- Education on Suffering and Persecution

Sociologically

- Advocate for the Persecuted
- Material Aid for the Persecuted and their dependents
- Prepare Churches for Suffering and Persecution

Theologically

- Theology of Suffering, Persecution & Martyrdom.
- Creation of appropriate strategies
- Call to Unity and Partnership

Concluding Thoughts

- We should not be surprised (1 Peter 4:12-13)
- We should Rejoice in Suffering (Matt 5:11-12)
- We Should Pray for Thankfulness (Phil 4:6)
- We should not be ashamed of Suffering (1 Peter 4:16)
- We must trust in God (1 Peter 4:19)
- We should stand firm and stand together (1 Cor 12:20-27)

What is my Response to Suffering and Persecution as Christian ?

Tertullian has said; “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.

We should consider

- Response When we are persecuted
- Response when others are persecuted.