

Message Eight

The Christian Life and Its Sufferings

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 2:11-12, 18-25; 3:15; 4:1-4, 7, 12-16; 5:1-4

- I. The purpose of 1 Peter is to establish and strengthen the suffering believers; their sufferings are used to arm them with a mind against the flesh that they may live not in the lusts of men but in the will of God (4:1-2), that they may share the sufferings of Christ and rejoice at the revelation of His glory (vv. 12-19), that they may be witnesses of the sufferings of Christ (5:1), and that they may be perfected, established, strengthened, and grounded for the eternal glory into which God has called them (vv. 8-10).**
- II. Christ as the first God-man with His suffering life is a model for us; we need to live a life which is a copy, a reproduction, of the life of Christ that comes from enjoying Him as grace in our sufferings, so that He Himself as the indwelling Spirit, with all the riches of His life, reproduces Himself in us—2:18-25:**
 - A. In His suffering life the Lord was a man of prayer—Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:28; cf. 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7:
 1. He was a man who was one with God—John 10:30.
 2. He was a man who lived in the presence of God without ceasing—Acts 10:38c; John 8:29; 16:32.
 3. He was a man who trusted in God and not in Himself, under any kind of suffering and persecution—1 Pet. 2:23b; Luke 23:46.
 4. He was a man in whom Satan, the ruler of the world, had nothing (no ground, no chance, no hope, and no possibility in anything)—John 14:30b.
 - B. As the members of His Body, His mass reproduction and duplication, the believers copy the Lord in their spirit, learning from Him according to His model by taking His yoke (the Father's will) and His burden (the work of carrying out the Father's will); such a yoke is easy, not bitter, and such a burden is light, not heavy—Matt. 11:28-30; 1 Pet. 2:21; Eph. 4:20; 1 Cor. 16:10.
- III. When the Lord offered up Himself as a sacrifice on the cross, He bore up our sins in His body on the cross, the true altar for propitiation; in His resurrection as the pneumatic Christ in our spirit, He is now the propitiation place where God meets and speaks with us and the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls to guide us to walk on the paths of righteousness, that is, to live to righteousness by walking according to our spirit—Rom. 3:25; 1 Pet. 2:24-25; Psa. 80:1; 23:3; Rom. 8:4:**
 - A. Christ was our Redeemer in His death on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24), and now He is our soul's Shepherd and Overseer in the resurrection life within us (v. 25); as such, He is able to guide us and supply us with life that we may follow in His steps according to the model of His suffering (v. 21).
 - B. It is by our holy and excellent manner of life as the reproduction of Christ's life in the midst of trials that the unbelieving ones see our good works "with their own eyes" and "glorify God in the day of His visitation"—the day on which God will look upon His sojourning people, as a shepherd looking upon his wandering sheep, to become the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls; when

God pays us a visit, that is the day of visitation—vv. 11-12, 25; Luke 1:68, 78; 19:44.

- C. Christ is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, shepherding us by caring for the welfare of our inner being and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our real person—1 Pet. 2:25:
 - 1. His shepherding directs our mind, comforts our emotion, and leads and guides our will; He leads us to the right place (just as He led His people to the good land—signifying the all-inclusive Christ) and guides us to the right spot (just as He guided His people to Mount Zion—signifying the overcomers as the reality of the Body of Christ)—Exo. 15:13, 17.
 - 2. His shepherding causes us to love Him and love one another so that love prevails in the church life—1 Pet. 1:8, 22; 2:17; 3:8; 4:8; 2 Pet. 1:7.
 - 3. Christ as the Elder, the Overseer, of our souls operates within the proper elders in the church, who are one with Christ to watch over the saints' souls in cherishing and nourishing them—Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Pet. 5:2.
 - 4. To shepherd the flock of God requires suffering for the Body of Christ as Christ suffered; this will be rewarded with the unfading crown of glory—Col. 1:24; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; John 21:19; 2 Pet. 1:14; 1 Pet. 4:13.

IV. In order to follow the footsteps of Christ to live Christ in our suffering of persecution (1:6-7; 2:18-25; 3:8-17; 4:12-19), we should arm ourselves with the same mind that Christ had in His suffering (v. 1; Phil. 2:5-11):

- A. The word *arm* indicates that the Christian life is a battle; the mind of Christ is a weapon, a part of the armor needed in fighting the battle for God's kingdom—1 Pet. 4:1-2; cf. Eph. 6:17-18.
- B. To live a life that follows the footsteps of Christ, we need a renewed mind (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23) to understand and realize the way Christ lived to fulfill God's purpose (1 Pet. 2:21-23; 3:18-22).
- C. Suffering responds to Christ's redemption to deliver us from our vain manner of life by preserving us from a sinful manner of life, from the flood of dissoluteness (4:3-4); to undergo such suffering, mainly from persecution, is God's discipline in His governmental dealing (vv. 6, 17).
- D. We should rejoice in sharing the sufferings of Christ, not regarding our fiery ordeals as strange, as if a strange thing is happening to us—vv. 12-13.
- E. In suffering persecution we must show others that we have Christ as Lord in our hearts, we must be constituted with the truth, and we must take care of our conscience—3:15-16; 1 John 3:19-20.
- F. If we are reproached in the name of Christ, we are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us—1 Pet. 4:14.
- G. If we suffer as a Christian, we should not be ashamed but should glorify God in this name—vv. 15-16:
 - 1. A Christian is a man of Christ, one who is one with Christ, not only belonging to Him but also having His life and nature in an organic union with Him, and who is living by Him, even living Him, in his daily life—2 Cor. 4:7; Phil. 1:19-21a.
 - 2. If we suffer for being such a person, we should not feel ashamed but should be bold to magnify Christ in our confession by our holy and excellent manner of life to glorify (express) God in this name—v. 20; 1 Cor. 10:31.