

Suffering and pain follows gospel ministry. The Philippian church supported and partook in the gospel ministry with Paul while in chains. The Thessalonian church suffered by their own countrymen, 1 Thess.1:6 (in affliction) & 2:14-15 (suffered). Titus confronts rebellious men teaching false doctrine and upsetting people, Titus 1:10-11. Smyrna saints would be tested and endure tribulation, Rev. 2:10. Pergamum saints held to the name of Christ, but Antipas was killed for holding fast to Christ, Rev. 2:13. Philadelphia was given an open door to preach the gospel in much difficulty, Rev. 3:8. They all suffered for the gospel.

- These are examples of ordinary believers in Christ who stood for their faith in tribulation.
 - All genuine believers suffer for the sake of the gospel.
1. **Suffering for the Gospel is for All Christians not just Pastors and Missionaries:**
 - a. Suffer with conviction: 1 Pet. 4:1, as sin lessens in your life. V2-6, no longer entangled in the lusts of men.
 - b. Suffer with service: V7-11, being sound in mind, sensible, and self-controlled, in prayer, utilize the time you have. Love others, serve others, genuine service is sacrifice. God provides the strength to do it, V11.
 - c. Suffer with faith: V12, don't be surprised by trials. V13, rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer for Christ, exalt in His future return and revealing. V14-16, rejoice because the glory of God rests on you.
 2. **Suffering for the Gospel is Easier when you Know the Main Characters:** 1) You: V16, we are helpless sheep. We are to speak the truth, V20. Called to endure, V22. 2) Persecutors: The wolves, or false believers, V16. Government, kings, and courts, V17-18. 3) Family: brothers, parents, children, V21. 4) Satan: a) not a cosmic battle where sometimes God wins and sometimes Satan wins. b) Satan doesn't make people do things, they are fully responsible for their thoughts and actions. James 1:14, we are tempted when carried away by our own lust. The devil schemes, Eph. 6:11.
 - ? Am I being tempted by my own lust and pride? Am I willing to sin to get what I want?
 - 1 Pet. 5:6-8, Satan devours as the results of our sin brings destruction and chaos in our lives and in the lives of others.
 - We watchful for his devices and schemes and be self-controlled, sensible, and humble to resist his devices.
 - 4) Our Triune God: V20, the Spirit of your Father will speak in us. We declare the name of the Son, for His sake, V18, 22.
 3. **Suffering for the Gospel is an Indication of Spiritual Maturity: Suffer with:**
 - a. Righteousness: V16, be wise (shrewd) but not worldly (innocent), showing grace and with dignity.
 - b. Reality: V17, beware of men. Do not fully trust those who are lost. Continue patiently with believers who are being sanctified as we are, speak to them about their sin.
 - c. Restfulness: V19, "do not worry," God will help you in time of need.
 - d. Re-evaluation: V23, go where you can be fruitful. Paul left Damascus in a basket, Acts 9.
 - e. Revelation: V23, the work will not be finished. The gospel ministry to the Jews won't be complete until Christ returns, Rev. 19.

4. **Suffering for the Gospel is Part of God's Sovereign Plan to Spread the Gospel:**
- 1) There is a double explanation for every human choice. Sovereignty is absolute.
 - 2) God cannot be tempted, nor does He tempt anyone, James 1:13.
 - 3) God chose Abraham, Gen. 12:1-3. He chose us in love according to His own will, Eph. 1:4-5. God chose and called Jeremiah before his birth, Jer. 1:5. God reveals His mysteries to whom He wills, Dan. 2:28. Jesus predicted the circumstances of His own death, Luke 18:31-34.
 - 4) Jesus tells His disciples to have peace because they will have tribulation, John 16:33.

Further Discussion and Application

How must we respond to persecution and difficulty in life for our faith? What should we expect and do when we are persecuted? How should we respond to those who persecute us? How do we see the devices and schemes of the devil when we are tempted? What is the antidote for loving the things and pleasures of this world? How has God enabled us to overcome? What do we possess that ensures our perseverance?

What about the sufferings of this world that don't seem to be gospel centered? The ailments, injuries, and issues of life? How do we make these issues of life a gospel opportunity? How can we be a comfort to those who are suffering in this world, while we suffer and endure? How can we make the most of the time we have in our trials, James 1:2-8, 2 Cor. 1:3-4? What is the result of the trials and testing we receive, Hebrews 12:1-17?

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19. V17 speaks of judgement beginning with the house of God. How is the body of Christ judged through suffering? What do we learn about our faith? Does our faith hold? What do we believe about the future bema judgement in 1 Cor. 3:10-15, 2 Cor. 5:10-11? What do we give an account for? What should we be telling others about future judgement if we appear before God without the blood of Christ to cleanse and justify us? What is our response to sin in our lives? How do we attack sin and crucify our flesh, putting off the old man? How will the Lord purify His church and prepare us for heaven? How is disciple and trial a part of that plan?