



“Stop Suffering for Stupidity” (I Peter 4:12-19)

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The emphasis here is on suffering “according to the will of God.” Several practical exhortations are given that hopefully will encourage us.

- Don't be surprised at your painful trial.
 - Phil.1:29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.
- Rejoice in the privilege of suffering for Christ.
 - Acts 5:41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.
- You will be overjoyed when His glory is revealed.
 - Romans 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.
- Commit yourself to your faithful Creator.
 - I Peter 2:23...when he suffered...he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.
- Continue to do good.
 - Joseph as an example: Resisting sexual temptation, faithful slave, faithful prisoner.

Benefits of suffering in the will of God:

1. May open a door for the gospel (Gal.4:13).
2. It produces perseverance, and through perseverance, character, maturity, and hope (Rom.5:3; James 1:2-4).
3. Maintains humility (II Cor.12:7-10).

4. It proves our genuineness as children of God (Rom.8:17; I Peter 1:6-7).
5. It enhances our fellowship with Christ (Phil.3:10).
6. Brings God's blessing (I Peter 4:14).
 - You are heaven's hero!
7. The willingness to suffer keeps me from being lukewarm (I Peter 4:1-2).

CCSP prayer requests mostly about easing my pain and suffering; read excerpts from Transforming Prayer (p.93).

"To choose to suffer means something is wrong; to choose God's will even if it means suffering is a very different thing. No healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not." (Oswald Chambers)

- Martin Luther was a German monk and a Catholic priest. He was the man responsible for initiating the Protestant Reformation. He was born into Roman Catholicism. His dad wanted him to be a lawyer, but while studying toward that aim, Martin went through a terrible thunderstorm. Fearing for his life when a lightning strike narrowly missed him, he made a vow to God that if he survived the storm he would become a monk. He survived and kept his vow. Luther was driven by fears of God's wrath, hell, and a need to gain the assurance of his own salvation. In 1511 he moved to Wittenberg to earn his doctorate in theology. Luther immersed himself deeply in the study of Scripture, especially the letters written by the apostle Paul. He became convinced that salvation was solely by grace through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Salvation, Luther now felt with assurance, was a free gift and could not be bought nor earned. As a result of Luther's revelation regarding this truth, he began to speak out against the Catholic church's practice of selling indulgences. The church sold these indulgences to raise money, teaching that those who bought them could get a reduced punishment for their sins, for the sins of departed loved ones, and sometimes total forgiveness from all sins. On October 31, 1517, Luther nailed his now famous 95 Thesis to the door of the church in Wittenberg. The thesis challenged the Catholic church on selling indulgences, and outlined the biblical doctrine of justification by grace through faith. Luther was warned by the Cardinals of Rome to recant his position, but he refused unless someone could point to Scriptural evidence for him to do so. In January of 1521, Luther was officially excommunicated by the Pope. Two months later he was ordered to appear before Emperor Charles V in Worms, Germany. A devoted friend, George Spalatin, sent word urging Luther not to go to Worms lest he suffer the same fate as John Hus. Hus was executed by the Catholic church for what they said was the heresy of teaching that Jesus Christ is the head of the church (not the pope) and that salvation is in Christ alone. Hus means "goose," and he became known by nickname as "the goose." His execution is where the phrase "the goose is cooked" came from. They burned him at the stake, and it is reported that just before his death he said, "You are now going to burn a goose, but in a century you will have a swan which you can neither roast nor boil." This would have been prophetic of Martin Luther, who referred to himself as the swan of Hus' prophecy. After Luther's death, Lutheran art frequently portrayed him with a swan. On trial before the

highest officials of the church and state, again Martin Luther was asked to renounce his views. On the first day he was overwhelmed by the immensity of what he was doing, so he asked for the night to pray and consider before he gave his final answer. Let me read you an excerpt from some of Luther's written prayer that evening: "How frail and sensitive is the flesh of men, and the devil so powerful and active through his apostles and the wise of the world!...O Thou, my God, my God, help me against the reason and wisdom of all the world! Do this! Thou must do it, Thou alone! For this cause is not mine but Thine. For myself I have no business here with these great lords of the world. Indeed, I too, desire to enjoy days of peace and quiet and be undisturbed. But Thine, O Lord, is this cause. And it is righteous and of eternal importance. Stand by me, Thou faithful, eternal God! I rely on no man...O God, stand by me in the name of Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, who shall be my Protector and Defender, yea, my Mighty Fortress, through the might and strengthening of Thy Holy Spirit." Here is Martin Luther's answer at trial the next day: "Since then your majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen. Luther's writings were banned and he was declared a convicted heretic. His friends "kidnapped" Luther and he went into protected seclusion. During this time he translated the New Testament into the German language. This gave ordinary lay people the opportunity to read God's Word for themselves for the first time ever.

We need men and women with the spiritual courage to persevere in suffering for the will of God. But believers with this kind of fortitude are a rare breed. That is why we must not miss v.17 of our text. The judgment mentioned here is a disciplinary judgment as a result of a believer's foolish (stupid) decisions/actions. This judgment is intended to be corrective, the goal of course to make us godly/Christ-like.

So here is a question we all need to ask ourselves: Am I suffering according to God's will, or am I suffering as a result of my own stupidity.

- Prov.12:1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.
- Illus: Show plaque from my desk.

v.17 Notice the list of things a Christian might do that would bring about this kind of judgment (see v.15).

- Murder; A believer/Christian can commit murder? Examples: Moses spent 40 years on the back side of the desert after killing the Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew (Ex.2:11-14); David, as a result of his sin with Bathsheba and the subsequent sins that followed, having Bathsheba's husband Uriah the Hittite, one of David's mighty men, killed in battle, had family problems the rest of his life. His son Amnon raped his half sister Tamar. Tamar's full-blood brother Absalom patiently plotted for two years, then murdered Amnon. Absalom became a fugitive, and as a result of David's failure to forgive his son, Absalom led a rebellion against David, and David had to flee for his very life. Absalom died tragically in battle, and David mourned greatly. Please note that God did not cause David

and his family do to these things as a result of David's failure. Nevertheless, had David not failed, the implication is that things would have been much different for him and his family (II Sam.12:8b-10). I must also add that God forgave David for his sin, but despite being forgiven, there were consequences that could not be avoided.

- Stealing; Gehazi was servant of one the greatest prophets of the Old Testament, Elisha. God used Elisha to heal an Aramean named Naaman of leprosy. When Naaman tried to pay Elisha for his healing, Elisha would not accept anything from him. But after letting him go back to Aram, Elisha's servant Gehazi caught up with him, lied about some men from the school of the prophets showing up right after Naaman departed, and asked if Naaman would give something for their needs. Of course Naaman was delighted to do this. Gehazi took what Naaman gave him back to his house and hid it. When he went back to Elisha, Elisha asked him where he had been. Gehazi lied again and said he had not gone anywhere. Read II Kings 5:26-27; Ananias and Sapphira died as a result of their taking part of the money for a piece of land the Holy Spirit led them to sell and give the proceeds to the church (Note Acts 5:5b, 11).
- Any other kind of criminal; Malefactor (evil doer); Misc. criminal charges: speeding, parking violation (mine from Ottawa), drugs, alcohol (DUI), tax evasion, fraud, engaging a prostitute (Samson, Judah, people in CCSP over the years), etc.
- Meddler: A busybody in other men's matters; See I Thess.4:11; Prov.26:17; II Chron.35:20-24.

Note: One way a Christian suffers as a result of foolish (stupid) decisions is by the natural consequences connected with their actions; i.e. breaking the law, family issues, etc. A second way they suffer comes directly from the sovereign hand of God (see I Cor.11:28-32).

If I am suffering as a result of my own foolishness, I need to repent, and then plead for the mercy of the Lord upon my life.

CONCLUSION

- The story of Balaam (Numbers 22, 25; Rev.2:14; II Peter 2:15)