“How to Live as Suffering Saints”

1 Peter 1:7-8

Should we acknowledge present suffering? Yes!

What we feel and experience is very real

Should we expect present suffering? Yes!

It is an inevitable right of passage into God’s eternal kingdom

Should we accept present suffering? Yes!

This ought to be our response, especially if it is for our allegiance to Christ and His gospel

Should we embrace present suffering?

Now, that’s taking it up a significant level

The answer again is a resounding yes!

Peter emphasizes this to be true in verses six to nine of chapter one

Trials always benefit believers

Suffering constantly, unfailingly and ultimately works for, not against a Christian

 2

This reality sets apart the Christian faith in the world

The atheistic evolutionist cannot claim his present sufferings will have ultimate, beneficiary realities

His trials are only part of a purposeless, evolutionary process over billions of years of time

His life comprises nothing more than a distinctly brief flickering flame, only to be extinguished in a moment, it’s effects evaporating into eternal oblivion

During his transitory existence, suffering must be seen only as an enemy, robbing him of momentary pleasures

Here’s the bottom line: there cannot be significance without permanence

This reveals why many people, who have no hope of eternal life, often turn to earthly substitutes to cope

Pleasure, fame, wealth, mind-altering substances

However, a Christian can actually embrace suffering since it accomplishes many positive, worthwhile things in time and eternity

Many Scriptures verify this comforting reality

Let’s consider what the Paul wrote in his letter to the church at Rome

 3

Romans 5:1-4: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Our trials validate, refine, and actually strengthen our faith

Therefore, in an unexpected, counterintuitive way our trials give us greater security

When we remain faithful rather than become embittered, when we express joy rather than resentment, when we keep serving rather than giving up, when we rest in God’s sovereign goodness rather than be overcome by anxious thoughts, it reassures us our faith is truly authentic

We don’t need to experiencing suffering to prove we’re Christians but when it does comes, we know it will only confirm the sincerity of our faith

 4

Peter goes on to say our faith is more precious than gold

One ounce of gold today is almost $1,900

Fort Knox holds up to 147,000,000 ounces of gold with a book value of well over $6,000,000,000

The eternal salvation we have through Christ is more valuable than all the existing gold in the entire world

Gold is a perishable substance, our future inheritance is not

This puts in mind of what Christ stated in Matthew 16:26

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Yes, our faith is much more valuable than gold and yes it will be tested, as though by fire

When one thinks of this, the most literal example would have to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

The genuineness of their faith was put to the greatest, possible test

Look with me at Daniel 3:15-18

Notice King nebuchadnezzar’s response in verses 28 and 29

Their unwavering caused him to give the glory to God

 5

So our present suffering works for us in beneficial ways, but more importantly, the commitment of our faith will ultimately bring praise, glory and honour to Christ

This will be brought into full realization when He returns

Yes, our eyes have not seen Him yet but some day this will be an inexpressibly joyful reality

What is the trial you are experiencing today which seems to be working against you, wearying your soul, sapping your strength and perhaps may be causing you to lose hope?

Realize anew your present struggle is unquestionably working for you and not against you

Your steadfast commitment to keep living for and serving God is accomplishing more than you can ever realize

What happened to Paul and Silas as is recorded by Luke in Acts 16:16-34 serves as a tremendously powerful example

Their faith infused with undiminished joy brought glory to Christ and the most unlikely human family into God’s kingdom

This should encourage us to live the very same way

Listen to the words of the song, “Until Then” and let them wash over your soul, bringing you new peace, hope, and true joy

 6

My heart can sing when I pause to remember
A heartache here is but a steppingstone
Along a trail that's winding always upward,
This troubled world is not my final home.

Chorus
But until then my heart will go on singing,
Until then with joy I'll carry on,
Until the day my eyes behold the city,
Until the day God calls me home.

The things of earth will dim and lose their value
If we recall they're borrowed for awhile;
And things of earth that cause the heart to tremble,
Remembered there will only bring a smile.

Chorus
But until then my heart will go on singing,
Until then with joy I'll carry on,
Until the day my eyes behold the city,
Until the day God calls me home.

This weary world with all its toil and struggle
May take its toll of misery and strife;
The soul of man is like a waiting falcon;
When it's released, it's destined for the skies.

Chorus
But until then my heart will go on singing,
Until then with joy I'll carry on,
Until the day my eyes behold the city,
Until the day God calls me home.