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Godly Living Part 6

Revelation 12:17 "And the dragon was enraged with the woman [the people of God from which the Christ came], and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

This is one of those uncanny passages which was written by God with you and me directly in mind. Satan's response to the ascension of Christ was and is to attack any and all who "keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus — and that means you and me! That raises somewhat of a sober realization, when we think of our lives as Christians in the United States, the metaphor that might come to mind would be the first picture in your notes — a glorious day at the beach. We want; indeed we expect, our lives to be easy, fulfilling, and pleasant. After all, isn't that the higher life?



Yet what we would see — if we could view this world through the eye of faith and Scripture — is the second picture (Juno Beach, Normandy) a war zone! Here, life is not easy or fulfilling. Those who live in such a place do so NOT for the present, BUT with the future in mind!



Based on the teaching of Peter, reality in this state of sin and misery for the Christian is akin to the latter! This world is NOT our home. It is a place of deprivation, trial, and difficulty. And amazingly, for the believer, we saw last week that God wouldn't have it any other way.

1 Peter 1:20b-21a, "...when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose..."

As shocking as it may sound, we have been saved in part that we might suffer in this life. Now lest you think this is a calling that goes beyond what is reasonable, remember that God has NOT called us to anything that He Himself was unwilling to undergo.

1 Peter 2:21b, "...since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps."

Jesus came to this earth to suffer. He truly was "...a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief..." (Isaiah 53:3b)! Yet He did all of this to demonstrate what it means to be a man or woman of God in Christ. As we just read, He did this to leave us "...an example for you to follow in His steps."

This is such was the important message Peter gave to his brethren who at the writing of this epistle were enduring unspeakable abuse under the Neronian Persecution of AD 64 to 68- a persecution that would claim the lives of Peter, Paul, most of the other Apostles, and many men and women of the faith! Now with Christ as our forerunner, pattern, and standard, we are able answer some very important questions; specifically what about fairness? We have been called to "suffer on account of our righteousness" (v. 20)? Yet is that fair? It is one thing if our suffering is because of our sin. Yet God's intention is that we suffer for doing what is

right! So again, is that fair?

Secondly if we must suffer — and we must — how can we endure when the heat of the fire goes well beyond our natural ability to endure? The tortures and abuse that God’s people suffered under Nero were so awful I cannot share them from this pulpit on account of the children present. Yet if you are familiar with this history, you might say with me: *“The calling is brutal; how will I be able to endure?”*

And the last question we might ask is why? Why is it God’s will that we suffer in this life?

[Its Justness, v. 22.](#)

1 Peter 2:21-22, “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.”

This passage, which was taken from Isaiah 53:9¹ speaks volumes! First, it tells us that Christ never sinned.^{2,3} This is so important for this speaks, in theology, of what is known as Christ’s ACTIVE Obedience.

When God created man, He placed Him in the garden with the responsibility of perfect obedience lest he die (Genesis 2:16-17). Yet all that Adam did at this time, he did NOT on his own behalf. For Adam was a Federal Representative. That means that if he sinned in the Garden, all those he represented (all of mankind) would be reckoned as covenant breakers and so die with him — which is exactly what happened. Speaking of Adam, Paul writes:

Romans 5:12, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

If you missed Paul’s teaching here, don’t be alarmed. Paul is going to repeat it five more times.

Romans 5:14b, “...by the transgression of the one the many died...”

Romans 5:16b, “...judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation...”

Romans 5:17a, “...by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one...”

Romans 5:18a, “...through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men...”

Romans 5:19a, “...through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners...”

Truly “...in Adam all die...” (1 Corinthians 15:22)!

In this regard, when Christ/God came to this earth, according to our text He came as a sinless Being (v. 22)! Why? Well, because God created a world where one man could represent

mankind, Christ came as “the last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45) to represent mankind, and so do what Adam could not: fulfill the responsibility of perfect obedience on behalf of His people!

1 Corinthians 15:22b, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.”

How is it in Christ we are made alive? It is because Christ never sinned.

2 Corinthians 5:21, “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf [this is talking about the cross], that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

At the cross, the sinner received Christ’s righteous life and Christ received the sinner’s death! (cf. also Romans 5:19)

Secondly, we learn from this passage that when the fire of opposition was at its hottest, Christ did NOT resort to the more common tool used by man to avoid difficulty — that tool being “deceit”!

1 Peter 2:22b, “...nor was any deceit found in his mouth.”

There are many forms of deceit in the Bible — manipulation, saying one thing and doing another, half-truths, and lying. Christ did none of these. At the moment of no return when Christ could have wiggled out of the sentence of crucifixion, Christ told the truth!

If you do a study of Christ’s last moments on the earth prior to His crucifixion, you will discover that He was brought before quite a few religious and political leaders.

- Annas — a deposed high priest.⁴
- Caiaphas — the current high priest.
- The Sanhedrin — the supreme court of Judaism.
- Pilate — the governor of Jerusalem.
- Herod Antipas — the governor of Galilee.
- Then back to Pilate.

At any moment during this time Christ easily could have gotten off if He resorted to “deceit”! He could have said, *“This has all been one big misunderstanding! I am not God! I did NOT come to Reform Judaism and so restore it to what God intended it to be!”*

Yet Christ did NOT resort to deceit (God’s Kingdom needs no such weapon)! As THE standard for that which constitutes manhood and womanhood, we must learn from this. Being a man (as opposed to an animal) means that you and I are sold out for truth- standing for it, proclaiming it, and, if need be, dying for it! This is man at his best!

A third truth — and the point of the text — is that all the things that Christ suffered in His life

and death was completely and totally unjust! In the context, this is the point! Peter is showing how Christ was/is the example of suffering for righteousness. That means, for Christ, His suffering indeed was NOT fair! Clearly, Christ did NOT deserve anything that He suffered! This is so important for us to understand. If we have been called for the purpose of suffering on account of righteousness, there will come those times in our lives where we lose perspective and so allow the pity party to commence:

- Why am I losing my job? I didn't do anything wrong!
- Why am I being penalized? What did I do?
- Why do bad things keep happening to me? What did I do to deserve this?

You must see that the immediate answer in the case of "suffering on account of righteousness" is, "Nothing"! Relatively speaking, suffering for righteousness is unjust!

However, the ultimate answer in the case of the sinner — you and me — is that which the thief gave on the cross. Speaking of the sentence of condemnation leveled against the thieves, we read this:

Luke 23:41, "...we indeed [are suffering] justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

Truly as sinners living in a sinful world, ultimately is there any such thing as unjust suffering in our lives? In the words of Jeremiah:

Lamentations 3:39, "Why should *any* living mortal, or *any* man, offer complaint in view of his sins?"

So, we have absolutely no ground ever to look at God and say, "Unfair!" or "Unjust!"

That having been said, on a case-to-case basis there are times we suffer unjustly — when we "do what is right and suffer for it." At these times we most certainly have grounds to say unfair, BUT NOT UNUSUAL! And how is that? Because as THE standard for the perfect man, Christ did NOTHING to warrant death; "[He] committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth." And yet He willingly gave Himself to it!

And this established a pattern by which God's children now will live:

- (1) Their good will be evil spoken of,
- (2) Their righteous living will be the cause of opposition,
- (3) They will be persecuted for righteousness sake!

This now constitutes the pattern of godly living in this state of sin and misery...

2 Timothy 3:12b, "...all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

Philippians 1:29: "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

1 Peter 4:12, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you... as though some strange thing were happening to you."- truly, to the believer, this world is a battle ground- a war zone! It no longer is about our happiness, comfort, or ease! To us belongs a higher call in the here and now!

So how does Godly Living translate to a hostile world? It means we are going to suffer even when we've done what is right. As Christ is our pattern, you can be sure that if He suffered unjustly, so also will you and me! Accordingly, when this occurs in your life, don't resent it or question God's goodness; rather allow it to remind you that you are an alien and stranger here... that this world is NOT your home! This brings us to the glory of suffering.

Its "Glory", v. 23a.

2 Peter 2:23a, "And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats⁵..." - you will recall that the word "glory" in the Bible speaks of the weightiness of the impact of an object or thing upon us or this world. Right? And so, to say that "God is glorious"

Is to say that He is intimately involved in life such that trusting Him, you will never be put to shame. Speaking of God's glory, Isaiah wrote this:

Isaiah 64:4, "For from of old they have not heard nor perceived by ear, neither has the eye seen a God besides Thee, who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him."

That is what we mean by a "glorious" God! Yet the term glory can also be used of objects, things, and even people.

1 Samuel 4:18, "And it came about when he mentioned the ark of God that Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy."

The word for "heavy" in the Hebrew is the same word for "glorious." It means "heavy," "of substance," or "fat." So get this, because Eli did NOT give glory to God, BUT to His sons (toward the end of his life Eli was NOT moved by God's character, grace, or love, BUT by what his children thought). As a result, he made foolish decisions which ultimately resulted in the loss of the Ark. When this occurred and word came to him, Eli fell over backwards off a fence, broke his neck, and died. And the question is: what killed him? It was the fact that he was fat/glorious! In other words, what was important in His life was NOT God, BUT himself!

All of this is to demonstrate the connotation behind "Glory" in the Bible. It speaks of something's impact upon something else! When that impact is great, we speak of glory! When

it is light, we speak of vanity!

In this regard, what in the Kingdom of God is the “glory”/weightiness of persecution, unjust suffering, and so martyrdom? We tend to think that it is massively significant such that our chief end in life is to avoid suffering at all costs! And when we are confronted by it, it radically shakes our world such that we need counseling and therapy! How much weight did the unjust suffering have in Christ’s life? According to the text this morning, very little!

2 Samuel 2:23a, “And while being reviled [As a present, the word⁶ speaks of non-stop insulting and/or abusive speech⁷ and so speaks of the abuse Christ encountered throughout His trial and crucifixion, like: (1) being spat upon, (2) the beating of His face with closed fists, (3) beating Him with rods, (4) mocking Him⁸, (5) blaspheming Him, (6) taunting Him⁹, and (7) accusing Him¹⁰- all of which were designed to get a rise out of Christ, to get Him to respond in anger, cursing, or bitterness! Yet...], He did not revile in return // while suffering [We looked at this last time. The word¹¹ referenced not only the physical suffering of Christ, but also the humiliation of His abuse. And yet here too...], He uttered no threats...”

You say, what about Christ in the garden sweating drops of blood on account of the stress that awaited Him (cf. Luke 22:44). Yes, Christ indeed sweat drops of blood, but, I assure you, that was NOT because of the physical suffering that awaited Him. It was because in a short time, He would bear the wrath of Almighty God!

So yes, Christ suffered and that grievously! Yet in comparison to the wrath of God, the turning of God’s face away from His Son, the anguish of “becoming sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21), all that Christ suffered in this life was but “momentary and light”! The revilings and sufferings He received were as a gnat on the windshield of a bus, they evoked NO response from Christ!

How was that possible? Christ Himself was a man with the same feelings as you and me. The instinctive response of human beings when so abused would be to try to get even, to threaten violence, or to hurt in return for being hurt. In the words of Dr. MacArthur:

As the sovereign, omnipotent Son of God and the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, Jesus could have blasted His cruel, unbelieving enemies into eternal hell with one word from His mouth (cf. Luke 12:5; Hebrews 10:29–31). (MacArthur, 2004, p. 168)

Yet and again, Christ did no such thing! How so? It was because of His trust in God — which here Peter includes as “an example” and so pattern for the child of God.

1 Peter 2:23b, “And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously.”

We really don’t have it in the US, but in London, there are times when the fog is so bad, the city can be crippled. Can you guess how much water there is in seven blocks of this crippling fog?

Less than one cup! Do you want to see seven city blocks of crippling persecution condense into less than a cup of water? “Entrust yourself to a God who judges righteously!” That’s how we Endure! What does that mean? It presupposes at least five things.

- (1) You begin by genuinely believing that your best is NOT when you get your way in life, BUT when God gets His — as Christ said in the Garden “not my will, but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42)! And so, you live on this world with one passion: that God’s purpose, glory, and will would increase... not yours (John 3:30)!
- (2) You live in light of the greatness of your God!

When facing death under Nero, notice how “faith” processed Paul’s impending death.

2 Timothy 1:12, “For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”

Paul knew that the One who directed His life was the Holy One of Israel... the Great I Am... the Master and Commander of the universe! As such, the world could take nothing from Paul that God would not return 100-fold (cf. Mark 10:28-30)!

You genuinely affirm that God is able to be trusted (which is what the word “faithful” means in the Bible) and so will bring about in your life what is in both His and your best interest! We see it in Peter where he later exhorts his brethren:

1 Peter 4:19, “Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.”

Are you able to trust God to do what is right/best/good in your life today? That is THE question of the hour when it comes to trial and difficulty. If not, you will scream, yell, and complain when things don’t go your way. Listen to the exhortation of Christ.

Matthew 7:9-11, “Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”

How much more is God able to be trusted with your present and future? You recognize that you will face nothing in this life that God hasn’t already brought countless thousands of His children through. Paul describes the trials and difficulties of life this way:

1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.”

In other words, what you are facing in your life this day, countless thousands of Christians before you faced, and God brought each of them through! And this very moment, each and every one of them are worshipping before the throne gazing upon His glory, beauty, and greatness! God did not lose one of them!

You understand that in Christ nothing you might suffer or encounter in this life is in vain — all of it has the net effect of producing glorious blessing NOT necessarily in this life, BUT most certainly in the life to come. Recall the words of Paul:

2 Corinthians 4:17, “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.”

No doubt with these five convictions and more in mind, we read of Christ and how He endured.

1 Peter 2:23b, “...[He] kept entrusting *Himself* [There is no direct object in the Greek here. Accordingly, what is in mind here would include not only Christ Himself, but the situation, the difficulty, the pain, and the persecutor- all of it] to Him who judges righteously.”

What does this mean? The word for “entrust”¹² means to “hand over,” “deliver,” or “commit” which is captured by the word “entrust.” Here it is used in the imperfect tense which speaks of a continual handing over of that which is entrusted.¹³

So, get the picture: throughout each of the sufferings Christ underwent as He approached the moment of God’s wrath, Christ didn’t just grin and bear it (He wasn’t a Stoic); nor did He explode. Rather, with each wave of abuse, Jesus just kept handing Himself, the situation, and all involved to the Lord whom He knew in the end would right all wrongs (that is the idea behind “Him who judges righteously”)!¹⁴

Romans 12:19, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”

Truly, this is how the crippling fog of trial and persecution evaporates in our lives! With each difficulty, we literally give it and ourselves to the Lord who will settle all accounts! When we do this — when we trust God to take care of vengeance (and so ourselves get out of the vengeance business) — we are free to bless in the midst of trial, as Paul continued:

Romans 12:20-21, “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Tomas Schreiner wrote:

The Scriptures nowhere teach that believers can refrain from retaliation because they become stoics in suffering and put on a brave face. Rather, believers triumph over evil

because they trust that God will vindicate them and judge their enemies, putting everything right in the end (cf. Romans 12:19–20).” (Schreiner, 2003, p. 144)

That Christian is our confidence in the midst of trial!

References

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End Note(s)

¹ “All four verses in this section are dependent on Isaiah 53. Verse 22 quotes Isaiah 53:9, and verse 23 apparently alludes to Isaiah 53:7. Verse 25 echoes Isaiah 53:6 (‘All we like sheep have gone astray’). Similarly, verse 24 includes not exact quotations but words and phrases drawn unmistakably from Isaiah 53:12 (‘he bore the sin [LXX: “sins”] of many’; cf. Isaiah 53:4, 11) and 53:5 (‘with his stripes we are healed’).” (Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, p. 137)

² Cf. also Matthew 27:4; John 8:29, 46; 18:38; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5.

³ “Peter’s quotations agree with the Septuagint with one change (also found in 1 Clem. 16:10), ‘sin’ (hamartian) is substituted for ‘lawlessness’ (anomia) in the OT text. This links the text to 2:24 more clearly and makes it evident that it was not just in terms of human laws that Jesus was innocent, but before God himself (cf. 4:1), a theme common in the NT (John 8:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 John 3:5).” (Dauids, 1990, pp. 110-111)

⁴ John 18:12-23

⁵ This is a likely allusion to Is. 53:7: “He was oppressed ... yet he did not open his mouth.”

⁶ λοιδορέω (*loidoreō*)

⁷ The same word is used in the LXX in Numbers 20:3 where the people so ‘reviled’ Moses that he responded harshly and then smiting the rock in anger (Numbers 20:10–11; cf. also John 9:28; 1 Corinthians 4:12).

⁸ cf. Matthew 26:67-68.

⁹ cf. Matthew 27:39-44.

¹⁰ cf. Luke 23:9-11.

¹¹ πάσχω (*paschō*).

¹² παραδίδωμι (*paradidōmi*)

¹³ “The NIV says that Jesus entrusted “himself,” but the Greek text has no object, so scholars debate whether Jesus entrusted himself, his cause, his passion, or his enemies.¹⁰⁶ Since the object is unspecified, it would be a mistake to limit the object’s sphere. Jesus kept “handing over” (paredidou) to God every dimension of his life, including the fate of his enemies.” (Schreiner, 2003, p. 144)

¹⁴ “Luke records how that pattern continued until the very end: “‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ Having said this, He breathed His last’ (Luke 23:46). Undergirding Jesus’ peaceful, resolute acceptance of suffering was an unshakeable confidence in the perfectly righteous plan of Him who judges righteously (cf. John 4:34; 15:10; 17:25). He knew God would vindicate Him according to His perfect, holy justice.” (MacArthur, 2004, pp. 168-169)