

# Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

## Lesson 51 – Share In Christ’s Suffering, Share In His Glory

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***I Peter 4:12-14, 19 (KJV)*** - Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified... Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

It is one thing to suffer for wrongdoing, for the suffering we incur from our own sin and folly. It is quite another thing to be caught off guard, shocked actually, for the suffering incurred for doing what is *right*! More specifically, the suffering incurred for openly bearing the name of Christ Jesus. As Peter pointed out it can seem *strange*, until we come to an understanding that this is, in reality, the normal life experience of a committed disciple of Jesus Christ.

If you will recall, when Jesus was on earth and spoke of the *suffering* He was to face on the cross, many of His followers deserted Him (see: John 6:66). Why in the world would they treat Jesus that way? His followers had expected the Messiah to reign in power over an earthly kingdom. Instead, He spoke to them of *suffering*. Since they could not understand, they turned away from Jesus and, “walked no more with Him.”

The danger is this, brothers and sisters, if you do not understand suffering as it relates to *doing* the will of God, then you too may turn away from following Jesus when you are faced with difficult circumstances.

Referring back to ***I Peter 4:19*** we read,

*Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

**Our Faithful Creator.** Peter emphasizes in this verse of scripture a key point - that God is true to Himself, to His people, and to His promises. He is our faithful Creator; that we can depend upon! Therefore, we should have a willingness to do the will of God, no matter what the cost. Just as Christ trusted Himself to His Father in Heaven who judges justly (***I Peter 2:23***), so should we commit ourselves (our souls) to our faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Jesus was the perfect example of patient submission to unjust suffering. Notice how Jesus handled Himself during those fiery trials when people came against Him for well doing:

***I Peter 2:20-23 (KJV)*** - For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

Keep your eyes, your attention, your affection upon Jesus, and He will see you through any trouble. I remember, many years ago, the first time I was critically persecuted for proclaiming the name of Jesus. I was shocked that Christian folk would respond so negatively to the truth of the Gospel. Yet, also knowing that persecution comes for the *Word’s sake* (see: ***Mark 4:17***). The fiery trial? The purpose of the fiery trial is to discover how rooted you actually are in God’s Word when persecution comes against you. Will you stay the course with Jesus or turn away?

Later, as I was sitting at home licking my wounds, *suffering*, the Spirit of God spoke to my heart. He wasn’t about to join my pity party. I’m forever grateful He didn’t! I’ll never forget the pertinent question He presented to me that day!

*“Sharon, knowing how much it hurts to be persecuted for proclaiming My Word, My question to you is this; are you willing to go back out on the front line for Me?”*

The exceeding joy that Peter spoke about welled up inside me like a warm liquid. Jesus was giving me a choice. He wasn’t controlling me. He was asking me. He was asking me to be a partaker of Christ’s suffering; to endure persecution when reproached for the name of Christ. My response to Jesus was instantaneous – YES! I will go back out on the front line *for You!* I knew then I could handle the opposition. I knew I could continue to proclaim the Word of God because He, my faithful Creator, would be with me – backing me!

**Suffering Backed By Joy.** This is what it is all about brothers and sisters. This is what the apostle Paul was speaking about when he said,

*Hebrews 12:2-3 (NIV) - Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

As we consider Jesus and how He endured such opposition from sinful men, we can learn to do the same with joy. As our elder brother, the Captain of our salvation, Jesus teaches us the lessons of faith along the pathway of suffering.

*Hebrews 2:9-11 (KJV) - But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the*

*captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.*

**In summary:** Sharing with Jesus Christ involves much more than looking forward to the glories of heaven; for God’s children have a special calling placed on them. It involves positioning yourself on the front line *for Jesus*, and staying the course when persecution (suffering) comes against you.

*Romans 8:16-17 (KJV) - The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

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### **Questions for Personal or Group Study**

*(Please do not mail to CA for grading):*

1. Suffering occurs for those who do wrong and for those who do right. What is different about the suffering a person experiences for doing what is right? **See: I Peter 4:13**
2. What should our attitude be if we are reproached for the name of Christ? **See: I Peter 4:14**
3. Proclaiming the name of Jesus can bring fiery trials. How do we move beyond thinking that some *strange* thing happened just to us?
4. When Jesus was on earth He spoke to His disciples about *suffering*. Since they couldn’t understand what He meant what did they do? **See: John 6:66**
5. Because Christ suffered for us, He left us an example to follow. How did Jesus handle Himself during fiery trials? **See: I Peter 2:23**
6. Why does persecution come and what is it’s purpose? **See: Mark 4:17**
7. What does the phrase “suffering backed by joy mean”? **See: Hebrews 12:2-3**