



Equipped for The Inevitable
“Introduction to the Letters of Peter”

Selected Scriptures

Throughout the nearly two thousand years of its existence, the church of Jesus Christ has been no stranger to suffering and persecution. The clash of truth with error, of the kingdom of light with the kingdom of darkness, and of the children of God with the children of the devil inevitably results in severe conflict.

Opposition, rejection, ostracism, scorn, contempt, persecution, even martyrdom have been the lot of believers through the centuries. The fact that the evil world system vents its fury and hatred on the church is obvious throughout history, and it is still occurring today. This should come as no surprise because that is the way it treated the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus made it plainly known that persecution would come to His followers: ***“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.”*** (Matthew 10:24-25)

Centuries before His birth, the prophet Isaiah predicted that Yeshua would be ***“...despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...”*** (Isaiah 53:3).

The apostle John noted His rejection by the world: ***“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him.”*** (John 1:10-11)

Beginning with the crucifixion of Jesus, the world has always sought to stamp out the voice of righteousness and rid itself of those who live in opposition to its evil desires. Since the church’s birth, she has been the target of Satan’s schemes. He attempts to destroy her, sidetrack and thwart her purpose, and persecute her at every turn.

Peter wrote his letters to Christians who were experiencing various forms of persecution. They were men and women whose stand for Jesus made them aliens and strangers in the midst of a pagan society. Peter encouraged these believers to steadfast endurance and exemplary behavior. The warmth of his words combined with his practical instructions make these letters a unique source of encouragement for all believers who live in conflict with their culture.

Getting Acquainted with the Realities of Suffering As we begin this journey through 1st century Christianity, we are not that far removed from the realities of suffering that our brothers and sisters faced during this time in church history.

Many 21st Century western Christians have no sense of the persecution suffered by the church in the past and in the present. We have been blessed with religious liberty. To a degree this has made the church in the West soft and too moldable to the sinful society.

The accountability will be enormous for how those in the western church have used the God given freedoms to share the gospel. We must take advantage of every opportunity to make great the name of Jesus - every single day of our lives.

The reality of suffering for the name of Jesus is inevitable. As time moves on, so does the prophetic timetable of God. As such, the world will become increasingly hostile toward Christ and Christianity as the spirit of antichrist gains momentum in preparation for the end times.

Application and Take Away:

Christians will experience the reality of suffering because of our identification with Jesus.

We are told often in Scripture that true followers of Jesus, those who are living their lives in obedience to the Word of God, active in witnessing to the lost, serving and loving the church - will suffer persecution.

As referenced earlier, Jesus made this clear. The point is not ***if*** we will suffer persecution, but ***when*** we suffer persecution. This is part of being His disciples. We suffer not because of us and our religious behavior. We suffer because of Him and our being identified with Him.

Paul wrote this truth to Timothy. Beginning with why persecution of the church and the righteous will happen, (***cf. 2 Timothy 3:1-13***) Paul addresses the reality of suffering.

When Christians experience persecution or suffering because of our relationship with Jesus, we should respond correctly to that suffering.

Our response to persecution of all forms is important because of Jesus. If we truly follow Him, correctly responding to the persecution that we experience is vital to the gospel.

Again, Paul gives us the way in which we are to respond to suffering - (***cf. 2 Timothy 2:3-13; 3:14-17***)

Jesus' words help us to realize that enduring is possible because of Him: ***"...In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*** (John 16:33)

cd.TCT.6417

www.thechurchattampa.com | @thechurchatTPA