

## SUFFERING FOR JESUS

1 Peter 2-4

By Raymond White

Jesus suffered for us, should we be willing to suffer for him? The Bible author who deals with this subject more directly than any other is Peter. The reason he deals with it so frankly is because he had no choice — persecution was coming and it could not be ignored. That, and something else.

*1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*

Galatia? Asia? Why is Peter suddenly sending letters to Asia? That's Paul's territory. Peter's area is Israel and Egypt. Why was Peter encroaching into someone else's mission field? Here's the clue.

*2 Peter 3:15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation: even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you.*

Why was Peter reminding Paul's churches what Paul has already them, and quoting Paul? The conclusion is not hard to reach: Paul is dead — executed by a headsman's ax by order of Nero. These good Christian people of Asia are feeling tremendous loss and are fearful. These letters from Peter to them are appropriate, and this was the right opportunity to discuss the frightful prospect of coming Roman terror, and to discuss what God expected of them.

What did God expect of them during these coming trials that they could not avoid? Jesus and Paul had much to say about the price of discipleship.

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| <i>Mark 13:13</i>        | <i>Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.</i> |
| <i>John 15:18</i>        | <i>The world hated me before it hated you.</i>          |
| <i>Romans 8:36</i>       | <i>For thy sake we are killed all day long.</i>         |
| <i>2 Corinthians 1:5</i> | <i>The sufferings of Christ abound in us.</i>           |
| <i>Philippians 3:10</i>  | <i>The fellowship of his sufferings.</i>                |
| <i>Colossians 1:24</i>   | <i>afflictions of Christ in my flesh.</i>               |

The world doesn't particularly hate us, it's Christ that the world hates. But once their hate had killed him, he was no longer in their reach, so the world had to turn its gun sights elsewhere. Since there was a lot of hate left over, since it could no longer reach him, where was it to go? Well, if Christ is in you (*John 17:23*) then guess what, you're the target.

You can either be quiet and get along just fine with the world, or you can do what God has asked you to do: *2 Timothy 2:19 name the name of Christ*. If you do that, that some of that hatred that the world targets to Jesus Christ will find its mark in you.

But is that fair? Look at it this way: Since Jesus suffered our sins and took the sword meant for us into his own soul (*Luke 2:35*), is it too much for him to ask us to take a few darts that are meant for him?

Here is what Christ asks us to do.

*1 Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

So Christ set the example and he expects us to follow. What exactly is his example? To suffer? To die? Maybe. But everyone dies sometime. So it's not simply suffering or dying that's the issue, but how you suffer or die. Here are Peter's four rules of suffering and maybe dying.

#### [1] BE INNOCENT

*1 Peter 2:22 Who did no sin.* Whatever injustice you are called upon to endure, make sure that it is undeserved. Be completely innocent so that your suffering is unjust.

#### [2] BE AT PEACE

*1 Peter 2:23 Who when he was reviled, reviled not again.* Don't complain about it.

#### [3] BE FORGIVING

*1 Peter 2:23 ...he threatened not.* Don't threaten to get even.

#### [4] BE TRUSTING

*1 Peter 2:23 ...but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* However you face death, trust God that your life, this one and the next, is in his hands.

#### [5] CONCLUSION

Ultimately, there are two ways to die: (1) for Christ, and (2) anything else. Since you have to die anyway, if you are one of the fortunate few who are allowed to die for Christ, that's a good thing. That is a glory that will follow you through the eternities.

*1 Peter 4:13 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.*

*1 Peter 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

If you are one of those called to make the ultimate sacrifice for Jesus, then later in heaven those sacrifices will be to you great glory. That's how Peter saw it as did the thousands of brave Christians who followed Christ and Peter to their own crosses and lions and burning stakes. Because of their sacrifices, their faith came down to us as something worth dying for. The importance of Christ's gospel is marked for all time by the blood of those willing saints who paid so high a price for him and for us. May we be as worthy if God calls us to our own crosses.