

A Believer called to suffer?



This may not be the most thrilling question but I believe it is worth asking and answering. There are scriptures throughout the New Testament that speak about suffering and for many years I took these scriptures and accepted things in my life due to a wrong understanding of what the word suffering actually meant.

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, (Philippians 2:9)

The apostle Paul states that we must suffer for Christ's sake, but what is the context? The setting of the book written to the Philippians is where we find the apostle Paul in prison facing possible execution in Rome. The previous verse (Phil 2:8), Paul is stating that there were those who would come to oppose the cross and the message of the gospel so in context, Paul was speaking of persecution. Paul was writing to the Philippians and encouraging them to remain confident in the same grace he was sustained in, they too would need depend on as there were those coming to mock the message of Christ.

Believers are redeemed from sickness, poverty, depression and any other curse that Jesus took on the cross (Deu 28:15-68, Gal 3:13), however we are not redeemed from persecution (2 Tim 3:12). If you are currently not being persecuted, it is because you are not living godly. Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you (1 Pet 4:12). A believer should not think it is something out of the ordinary when persecution comes because we are pressing directly against the world's system and there will be opposition.

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Hebrews 2:10

Is this verse saying that we need to suffer to be made perfect? How many times have you suffered and been in a place of pressure and that has made you perfect? There isn't one, so this verse is not stating that. Again, when we understand context, it will help rightfully divide the word of truth. The suffering mentioned in this verse is referring the suffering Jesus endured on the cross. This is a substitutionary suffering in that Jesus suffered, so a believer wouldn't have too. What makes a believer perfect is putting their faith in Jesus' finished works and the cross (Heb 12:23, Col 2:10).

In conclusion, a believer is called to suffer but it is not the suffering that many are preaching. Sickness, lack, or any other curse should be resisted; not embraced (Jam 4:7). If you believe that you are called to suffer depression or loss, then that is the very reason your life is reflecting that. If you adopt the belief that you must suffer any of the curses mentioned in Deuteronomy 28:15-68 then what is the point in being born again? We may as well stay like the rest of the world and disregard always being caused to triumph (2 Cor 2:14), being more than conquerors (Rom 8:37), and God giving us victory through Jesus (1 Cor 15:57).