

Connect360: The Ministry of Suffering

October 17, 2022

- *Lesson 6 in the Connect 360 unit "Hunger for Holiness: Living Pure in an Impure World" focuses on 1 Peter 2:18-25.*

Suffering in faith is not without consequences. The negative consequences may be the most expected and the most obvious, but there are positive results as well. Peter told his readers we experience grace when we endure suffering with our relationship with God in mind. In other words, when we are focused on Christ, enduring suffering draws us closer to him. In this second view of suffering, Peter encouraged his readers to view suffering as a blessing not to be avoided.

Paul wrote in Romans 5:3-5, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Paul understood through his own experience that suffering is an important aspect of the Christian's sanctification process. Just as the strain of a workout builds an athlete's muscles, the strain of suffering builds character and Christlikeness in a believer.

Most western believers, having lived a life of relative ease, view suffering as something to be avoided. Richard Wurmbrand understood the value of suffering in the life of a Christian. In his book *Tortured for Christ*, he wrote: "Persecution has always produced a better Christian—a witnessing Christian, a soul-winning Christian. Communist persecution has backfired and produced serious, dedicated Christians such as are rarely seen in free lands. These people cannot understand how anyone can be a Christian and

not want to win every soul they meet.”

Imagine, if you can, what would happen in the world if every believer saw suffering for Jesus as something to be embraced rather than something to be avoided?

Suffering is a fact of life, and for Christians, that suffering often comes because of our faith in Jesus. Rather than avoid or bemoan our persecution, we should endure it with joy, because we know that it is a part of the maturation process as we become more like Jesus. We become even more aware of the grace of God in our lives when we face the trials in his strength.

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