

"Do Not Think It Strange"

1 Peter 4:12-13

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:12-13).

When people in the world see one persecuted for his religious beliefs, they figure it is because that person is doing something wrong--either his teaching or practice is too radical. They think he is strange. However, as the above verse points out, there is nothing strange about a faithful child of God being mistreated by the world. Rather than an exception, it is a rule.

Paul said, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). This persecution will come not only from those without, but also from those within. Paul was not only mistreated and abused by pagans and Jews, but also by brethren (Acts 14:3-5, 19; 16:16-24; 2 Cor. 10:10). Those with FAITH in the faith will suffer at the hands of false brethren and others (Heb. 11:32-40). No, it is not a strange thing to suffer as a result of living for Christ. It would be strange not to suffer (cf. Lk. 6:26)!

Why did Paul suffer? Why do faithful men and women of every generation suffer? Jesus said, "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed" (Jn. 3:19-20). The reason people of God suffer at the hands of others is because they hate the light. They hate it when our practice and life condemn their evil works (cf. Heb. 11:7). They hate it when our teaching exposes their sin (cf. Acts 7:54-60).

Do not be discouraged. Even the Lord suffered. He was the only perfect one--perfect in action and teaching (Heb. 4:15). Yet, they nailed Him to the cross. Should it be any wonder if his disciples experience similar treatment? "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!" (Matt.

10:24-25).

Rather than being discouraged, let us rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name (Acts 5:41). As Peter wrote our passage, those who partake of Christ's suffering can look forward to the time when He will return and reward them for their service. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

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