Introduction

How we look at suffering makes a great deal of difference in how we handle it.

I. Don’t be surprised by suffering. Verse 12

“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.” John 15:18

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

Sometimes people are surprised when bad things happen to Christians. There are two false promises that are sometimes made.

- Come to Christ and all your problems will be solved.
- Come to Christ and you will be healthy and prosperous.

If you choose to follow Christ and live for him, some of your “problems” may be just beginning.

The normal Christian life is not easy and free of suffering.

II. Rejoice in the midst of our suffering. Verse 13

The theme of rejoicing in suffering is common in the New Testament.

- Romans 5:3-5 – We rejoice in our sufferings because of what they produce in our life – perseverance, character and hope.
- James 1:2-4 – Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds – so you may be mature and complete, not lacking in anything.
- I Peter 1:6-7 - In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Paul, James and Peter are all saying what Jesus said. There can be joy in the midst of suffering.

The two spiritual commitments that meant the most to those who were suffering for Jesus were worship and the Word of God.

III. Remember, if you suffer for the sake of Christ, you are blessed. Verses 14-19
“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:11-12

It is not suffering for evil that counts. It is suffering for Jesus that counts. Verses 14-16

One day God will settle all accounts. Verses 17-19

One of the things that suffering does is it refines us and it refines the church.

It is those who suffer with Christ who will share in his glory.

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” Romans 8:18

Conclusion

What should we do?

Be bold and share the gospel.

Don’t take for granted the freedoms we have been given.

Worship God and grow in his Word!