

He Knows What He's Doing

by Richard E. Bieber

God knows what He's doing, and the suffering of the believer is required for the refinement and solidification of faith.

Topics: "Suffering And Persecution", "Trust In God"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the unique suffering experienced by followers of Jesus, emphasizing the necessity of embracing the trials that come with taking Jesus seriously, including persecution and fellowship in His sufferings. He highlights the importance of humbling ourselves under God's hand, casting all anxieties on Him, being watchful, resisting Satan, acknowledging the suffering of fellow believers worldwide, and trusting in God to bring suffering to a glorious end. Bieber encourages giving God glory throughout trials, praising Him even in the midst of difficulties.

Transcript

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you. Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you.

To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. I Peter-5:6-11 As long as we keep our Christianity within the confines of respectability and common sense, nothing jarring ever happens to us apart from the troubles that come to all people, whether they're believers or not. But when we start taking Jesus seriously, - believing His promises, - doing the things He tells us to do, then we begin to experience a kind of trouble which is unique to the followers of Jesus: the suffering of His Cross.

Just as surely as you will have joy unspeakable as you follow Jesus - Just as surely as you will have visions of God and His purpose that make life worth living - Just as surely as you will have every material thing you need as you seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness - Just as surely as you will have peace which passes all understanding - you will also have, as you follow Jesus, fellowship with Him in His sufferings. if you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the word that I said to you, "A servant, is not greater than his master". If they persecute me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all this they will do to you on my account. There are far too many teachers these days who spend all their time telling you about the goodies. The peace and the joy, and the blessings, and all the mighty things you'll be doing. But they let you find out about the Cross the hard way. They take a passage like I Peter and lift out that beautiful verse that tells you to; "Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you".

But they 'don't tell you about your adversary the devil who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, or about the suffering which is experienced by the brotherhood throughout the world. When the trouble comes and you're caught unprepared, you go looking for these teachers, but they're gone. One day these teachers will have to answer for the souls that were wrecked because they only told half the story. If you go to scripture and study the teachings of Jesus you can't help but notice how careful Jesus is to make clear to every soul who follows Him that the unspeakable blessings of His Kingdom are experienced in this world amid persecution, amid trial.

Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house, or brothers or sisters, a mother or father, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel, who will not receive a hundred-fold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions. Whether things are mellow for you at the moment or whether you're going through trial, the message of the Spirit to every believer is this - if you are following Jesus you will experience the suffering of Jesus' Cross.

If this suffering hasn't come yet, don't get paranoid waiting for it. But settle it in your heart that sooner or later it will come. If you are going through trial, get clear in your mind that it's normal. God isn't making you go through something that others don't have to go through. - All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. - In the world you will have tribulation. The book of first Peter is a letter written to followers of Jesus who were suffering for their faith - written by a man who was suffering for his faith - and who knew that he would soon be dying for his faith.

It's one of the most wonderful little books in the Bible. If you're going through the fire this is the book to read. If you're not going through the fire this is the book to lay up in your heart so you're ready when the fire comes. The letter starts out by explaining why this suffering has to be - it's the only way our faith can be refined and made solid. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By His great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in Heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.

In this you rejoice, though now you have to suffer various trials so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. God knows what He's doing. All the things that are happening to you are happening with His permission for your good. Not to ruin your life, but to refine it, to make it real, to temper your faith into something that neither man nor devil can destroy.

And, at the end of the letter, Peter tells us exactly what we need to do when we're going through these trials. We ought to take these verses, 6 to 11 of Chapter 5 (as seen above) and paste them on our mirrors and dash boards and refrigerators until they are burned into our minds. I. The first thing to do when trial or persecution come is humble yourself under God's hand. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God that in due time He may exalt you. When trouble comes our natural tendency is to stiffen our

necks against God and complain.

"You brought us out of Egypt, Lord, and now you're going to starve us to death?" "Is this the reward I get for following Jesus?" We get our backs up and start suspecting that God doesn't know what He's doing. And the more stubborn we get the more painful the trial becomes. When Satan was permitted to destroy Job's family, Job fell upon the ground and worshipped God. "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Job humbled himself under the mighty hand of God. When David's son Absalom revolted against him, David had to flee Jerusalem like a refugee. And there was a man named Shimei who ran along the ridge of the hill and threw stones at David and cursed him. "Begone, begone! You man of blood, you worthless fellow!" "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the King", said one of David's officers. "Let me go over and take off his head." But David answered, "Let him alone and let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him.

It may be that the Lord will look upon my affliction and that the Lord will repay me with good for this cursing of me today." David humbled himself under the mighty hand of God. God help us to do the same. "O Lord, I don't know what this trouble means or when it will end. But I know that it wouldn't be happening without your permission. May your name be praised." 2. The second thing we need to do when trial comes is cast our anxieties on God. "Cast all your anxieties on Him for He cares about you."

Don't try to carry those worries yourself, you can't. You'll sink under them. When the armies of the Moabites and Ammonites were coming against the land of Judah, King Jehoshaphat took it to the Lord. "O God, we are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon thee." He cast his anxieties on his God and the answer came through Jahaziel the prophet, "Fear not and be not dismayed at this great multitude. For the battle is not yours but God's."

And so it was. You can live in the midst of chaos and still have peace if you give your anxieties over to your God. 3. When you're going through trial, be watchful. Believers often think that when trouble comes, this gives them an excuse to get sloppy. "I can't pray. I just have too much trouble pressing on me." If you aren't watchful, thoughts like that will be your undoing. This is the time you need to pray. "I can't go to fellowship. After what I've been through this week, even the thought of those pious little Christians makes me sick."

This is the time when you need to be with brothers and sisters. This is also the time when you'll be inclined to overeat or to turn into a vegetable in front of your T. V. - to escape into the nearest available form of self-indulgence. Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. 4. When you're going through trial, resist Satan. Don't just tolerate him - send him away. In Jesus' temptation He resisted Satan at every point and because He resisted, could say, "Begone Satan", and Satan left.

When it comes to Satan and the thoughts that come from Satan, there is no room for tolerance. Don't be sitting around having a friendly debate with the devil. You'll lose. If these people who are so broadminded that they tolerate Satan's stimulating conversation could only see their tolerance for what it is - stupidity! No wonder they fall into his trap again and again! Resist him, firm in your faith. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. When it's clear that your eye is single - that for all your suffering and bewilderment Jesus is the treasure of your life, your heart is set on doing His will - Satan will go.

But if you tolerate him, as many of these broadminded believers do, he'll hang around as close as he can waiting his chance to muddle your mind and distort your vision of God until you won't know where you are anymore. 5. When you're going through trial, know that your brothers and sisters are suffering too. Knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. The Evil One will try to make you think you're the only one - that no one has ever gone through what you're going through.

You have brothers and sisters on this planet right now who are sitting in prisons for living the gospel. - Others are being tortured. - Others are being disowned by their families. There are believers in your city who are despised by their own people - living and ministering in spite of threats - feeling the brunt of hatred every day. You are not alone - you have brothers and sisters in this. 6. When you're going through trial, know that God will bring this suffering to a glorious end.

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself, restore, establish, strengthen you. The suffering of the believer always has an end so glorious it makes the time of trial seem as nothing. Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the Throne of God. The cross is always followed by a crown - always. Even if trial involves our death - and for some of us it will - there is a crown.

Paul came to the time of his martyrdom - "For I am on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day." 7. And finally, when you're going through trial, keep giving God the glory. "To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen!" We ought to be praising God at all times.

But there is no time when we ought to be praising God more than when we're going through trial. When Jehoshaphat led his little army to meet the hordes of the Ammonites and the Moabites they were singing, "Give thanks to the Lord for His steadfast love endures forever". God help us walk through our trials with that song in our hearts. God help us to keep praising Him and thanking Him even when the sky is falling in. Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food; the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord.

I will joy in the God of my salvation. For most of us things are still quiet. But the Spirit of God is telling us that they won't stay quiet much longer. May God help us in the little trials that come our way in these days of relative peace, to learn to walk by faith as His sons and daughters, so that when the real trial comes we may keep right on living and dying to His glory.

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