

Is It God's Will for His People to Suffer?

"So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."

1 Peter 4:19 (NIV)

Having spent many years in Christian ministry I have had many opportunities to work with people who suffer. I hope I never become easy in the presence of people's pain.

I always seek to be a calm voice to those in the whirlwind of adversity yet inwardly I am always troubled by what I see on the faces of those I seek to help.

No one ought to seek out trouble as there is no use in having sorrow for its own sake. We are all called on by our Lord and Saviour to rejoice and be glad in the salvation we have in Jesus. Of all people, the Christian has the best reasons for being happy in this life.

However, in spite of the views of some well meaning Christians, there are times when a child of God will suffer as part of God's will for them. When a believer suffers it is their responsibility to understand the sorrow as part of God's working in their life.

Just as pain in the physical life is a good thing to awaken

us to disease and health issues that cause the pain, so the mental and spiritual pain in life can make us come closer to the Lord and learn the lessons He will teach us in our situation. We become much stronger through adversity than through a life of relative ease.

The context of our verse is speaking especially about the believer being persecuted for being a Christian. The way that God rules in His world is such that He permits His own beloved people to have sorrow on account of their godly and righteous lives.

This sounds somehow unfair to many people. Why would God allow His best children to have much pain and suffering? Should He not reward the most devout Christians with a life of health and wealth? After all they are doing more for His glory than others.

What Peter is saying in our verse is that when believers suffer in the will of God they should "deposit themselves" for safekeeping to their "faithful Creator". When suffering comes along it

threatens us and we ought to "commit", or better translated "deposit", ourselves with God for safekeeping.

Paul the apostle speaks of his suffering in many ways and says in 2 Corinthians 4:16, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." (NIV) So in Paul's passage as well as in Peter's writing we see that it is all part of God's design for His people to suffer in this life.

Everyone who is sorrowful is anxious to know exactly why the pain has come to them. However, in certain instances God does not reveal His purpose as clearly as we might wish. In those situations we are called on to "deposit" ourselves with a faithful Creator Who will keep us safe until our journey ends at the house of God.

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