

## Discipleship Involves Suffering

1. But Rejoice
2. And Stay Strong

### *Discipleship Involves Suffering*

- When heard lessons, notice recurring theme, jumped out vs. after vs.? Notice in 1 Pt, “suffer(ing)” no less than 6x? Hear Jesus in Gospel: **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mk 8:34)**? Then if save life, lose it? Losing life, bearing cross, suffering – what talking today? We are Ev. Luths. – we focus on good news message of gospel of JC, power of God, salvation all who believe (Rm 1:16); we emphasize salvation by grace, through faith, faith in Christ, revealed in Scr alone. So why talk re crosses and suffering?
- Discipleship involves suffering. Unpack: discipleship, being disciple of Christ, and everything that entails (knowledge what God did to save; faith believes true; comfort that gives in life; hope for eternity; zeal/drive to live life for God) – being disciple of Jesus involves suffering for being disciple of Jesus. That’s part of discipleship. What Jesus emphasizes in Gospel, **Mk 8:34**; and what Peter (himself leader of Jesus’ first disciples) emphasizes, as well, in lesson, 1 Pt 4,5. Disc involves suffering. But, even though true, Pt says rejoice (reason to rejoice); and stay strong.

### *But Rejoice*

- **Vs. 12.** Not strange at all for Christians to suffer for being Christian. Never has been. When Pt wrote 1 Pt, Christians were suffering in ways hardly imagine. Roman Emperor, Nero, hated Christians; in twisted mind came up with all kinds horrible ways Christians suffer. Quote Roman historian from era (Tacitus) for example; talking re Christians: *“Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.”* So when Pt wrote: fed to animals in Coliseum, burned alive as torches, and crucified like Savior.
- So how write: **vs. 12-13a.** Rejoice! How would that be possible?! How could rejoice when faced this kind of torture, just for being Christian?! I’m sure most of us never faced this level persecution for faith; live in safe country where free to worship in peace; I pray none us ever go through what 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians in Rome went through.
- But words of Pt, and lesson of history, remind me of two things: 1) even if we here don’t face this level persecution, Christians other parts world do; parts of world where Christians are tortured to death, threatened, persecuted mercilessly just for being believers in Jesus. Certainly doesn’t escape my attention that this sermon comes on very imp 15<sup>th</sup> ann; horrendous attack on our country 15 years ago today is proof that in world among certain people not only America hated but Christ is hated, and Christians, and gospel. So, we need first to be reminded that sufferings Christians endured in Rome long ago still take place today, will continue in some form, fashion until Last Day. Some places less severe; you: made fun of, thought less of for being disc of Jesus. But discipleship involves suffering.
- 2) we need remember that if Peter urged these Christians (suffered much worse than we do) to rejoice, then same encouragement to rejoice in face of suffering applies also us. Even if we suffer less than they did, Peter still: **vs. 13a, 16.** How realistically do that? Only way to rejoice in our sufferings, in crosses we bear, is to remember JC, who suffered and bore cross for us, so we never have to suffer God’s punishment. Don’t forget, because of our sins, we deserve to suffer – earth, hell. But instead of putting us through that, God put JC through that in our place. Jesus suffered crucifixion, literally bore cross as our sub. By doing so, forgiven all our sins, taken away not only guilt, but also punishments we would have suffered for that guilt. That’s cause to rejoice! Our God loves us; nothing can take that love away, no matter what crosses we bear. Jesus: **“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” (Mt 5:11-12). Vs. 14.** Disc involves suffering, and God calls that a blessing. So as counterintuitive may sound, Peter says when suffer for being Christian, rejoice!

### *And Stay Strong*

- And stay strong. When suffer for being Christian, stay strong. We have to stay strong because very easy for Satan to use sufferings to destroy our faith. **Vs. 8.** Some think Satan wants us be little rebellious, push limits of law, not be so strict – that basically all he’s interested in is you having a little fun. No! Satan doesn’t care whether you have fun. He wants destroy faith, bring hell! Doesn’t care you at all! Wants to rip you, your faith shreds.
- So Pt – stay strong. **Vs. 9.** We’re not alone in this fight. Every Christian is tempted; every Christian suffers. But Jesus more powerful than Satan! Jesus has locked up that roaring lion in cage, thrown away key. Did that on Easter when rose from the dead. That’s the ultimate display of power; proves that Jesus is more powerful than Satan.
- And that’s what gives us strength to stay strong. When feel weak, Pt: **vs. 7.** Whatever is bothering you right now, troubles your heart, keeps you up at night, discourages you – whether sin, broken relationship, or whatever situation, whatever cross you are bearing – cast those anxieties on Jesus Christ, your strong Savior, because he cares for you, and he is your source of strength. He will help you stay strong. **Vs. 10.**

### *Conclusion*

- Yes, disc involves suffering. Just one of facets of being believer in Jesus Christ. Inescapable reality. **Vs. 16.** What Peter says today. Yes, disc involves suffering. But rejoice – your names are written in heaven. And stay strong – your strength comes from Jesus.

### **1 Peter 4:12-16; 5:6-11**

<sup>12</sup> Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup> If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup> If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. <sup>16</sup> However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

<sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. <sup>7</sup> Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

<sup>8</sup> Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

<sup>10</sup> And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. <sup>11</sup> To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> The Roman historian Tacitus wrote his famous *Annals* about fifty years after *First Peter* was written. This selection, translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, is taken from Book 15, section 44, and is available (as of this writing) at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/tac/a15040.htm>.