

“Judgment in God’s House”

1 Peter 4:12-19

Introduction

Suffering and judgment. Those are perhaps two of the most unpopular words in the English language. People get uncomfortable when either one of these topics comes up, especially when Christians discuss these topics. As Christians, however, we cannot shy away from the inevitability of suffering and the reality of judgment. In fact, God uses suffering to judge His church in order to accomplish His will in history. Suffering is a tool God can employ to discipline His church, address sin in the church and correct what is wrong with the church.

As Christians, we are the spiritual family of God. He is a good Father, and like any good father, God must discipline His children when they sin and deviate from His will. God also allows those that believe in Him to endure suffering even when they are doing things right. Scripture says that this righteous suffering is something we can expect, identify with and rejoice in. If we are following Jesus, we will most certainly face suffering and persecution (1 Thess 3:3-4; 2 Tim 3:12). It should not surprise us, therefore, when it comes. Rather, we should rejoice because we are suffering for the sake of God and the gospel, and this suffering helps us identify with Jesus Christ and His suffering on the cross. God always begins with the judgment of His church before the judgment of the world (1 Pet 4:17). However, we can be grateful because being judged as God’s church means that we will be spared the condemnation that will fall on those who do not follow God (1 Cor 11:32).

Suffering and judgment produce purity in the church by removing what is wrong, sinful and illegitimate. This purification process allows God to make His church what He wants it to be. It also causes Christians to have a greater degree of God’s presence and power at work in their lives. As God works through His church, the church can be a clearer light to the world as it demonstrates God’s perfect standards. Through the refinement of suffering and judgment, the church can have a greater impact on the world to seek and save the lost. God does not desire that any should perish, and as members of His church and His family, we should also desire above all to see His will accomplished.

Getting Started

1. What are some examples of good parenting when discipline is necessary?
2. How would you define righteous suffering, and what does it look like?

Let’s Get Personal

1. In light of this message, how has your view of suffering changed?
2. When have you suffered or experienced judgment for making a mistake or sinning? When have you suffered or experienced judgment for following Jesus?
3. How do you rejoice in suffering? Do you find that difficult? Why or why not?

Take the Next Step

1. How has suffering refined you and helped you grow? Who can you share your testimony of growth with this week?
 2. How can you invest more fully in the life of your church? What are ways that you can contribute to your church’s mission to seek and save the lost?
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3. Want to go deeper? Take time to look at the following passages: Matthew 5:11-12; 16:18-19; Mark 10:28-31; John 15:21-24; 1 Corinthians 11:32; Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:10; 5:32; Philippians 1:28, 30; 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:12, 15; 1 Peter 4:12-19; and Hebrews 10:19-21.

Renew Your Mind

*“For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God;
and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome
for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”*

1 Peter 4:17
