



24 FEBRUARY 2018
SUFFERING

1 Peter 4:12 “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief maker. 16 Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name. 17 For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?” 19 Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good.”

Suffering is an often repeated theme as the story of the early Jesus-followers unfolds. They were persecuted for their faith. They refused to allow Caesar to dictate their religious beliefs; they would not submit their ultimate loyalty to the Empire; and even in the province of Judah they challenged the way the leaders of the temple interpreted the law. And they suffered for this stubborn refusal to collaborate with the system.

This example has echoed as a challenge to Jesus-followers ever since: every time a human authority seeks to claim absolute authority over the lives of people, Jesus-followers are called to push back. And if denying human authority the right to ‘act like God’ results in alienation and suffering, then “do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name”.

For Thought

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the solemn watchword hear;
If while ye sleep He suffers, away with shame and fear;
Where'er ye meet with evil, within you or without,
Charge for the God of battles, and put the foe to rout.*

Words: George Duffield, Jr., 1858.

The Second Sunday in Lent

The Cost of Discipleship

The Scripture passage for the day is drawn from Reuben Job and Norman Shawchuck, A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and other Servants, (Nashville, The Upper Room 1983), 112.

This reflection is from my own devotional exercises for the day.