

Every Believer Will Suffer – Matthew 5:1-12

INTRODUCTION – When God saved us from sin and death He could have taken us to heaven instantly. All believers have been made complete by Christ and therefore are fit to enter heaven as holy citizens. But He did not. Most believers after salvation have to remain behind on earth where the Devil is the god of this world (cf. 2Cor 4:4). Some may remain for only a few hours after salvation like the malefactor who believed in Christ as his Lord and Saviour when he was on the cross next to Christ. He preached only one sermon and only to one person before he entered into paradise. Conversely there were those who lived and served for decades like Jeremiah and Isaiah before their work was done and they were called home to glory!

It is an observable fact that everyone suffers on this earth. The reason is because of sin. Before there was sin the world was one of harmlessness and safety. There was no sickness or death. There were definitely no evil people until sin came. The moment sin entered into this world suffering became part of man's existence. There is no escaping suffering as long as mortal man lives on this earth. What about the children of God who serve Him on this earth? Do they have to suffer like everyone else? Will they be spared the suffering and ills that consume this earth? What is the biblical teaching on believers suffering on earth as they serve the Lord?

I. Delivered From Suffering – 5:1-5

Very often we do not see salvation as a deliverance from suffering. It is the suffering that comes upon all mankind because of sin. We are conceived and born in sin. From the age of accountability, we have allowed the lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes and the pride of life to run wild. They control our desires, hence our lives. Sin upon sin and suffering upon suffering has been the norm until we die in sin, and then only will suffering on earth end. This suffering is due to the “master” called sin. Sin is delightful at times as it appeals to the flesh. But the end of it is death! This “suffering” need not always end in death for it to end.

These first three beatitudes summarise our deliverance from sins' suffering, i.e. the salvation we have in Christ on earth. That is why the first beatitude that initiates the beginning of a person's salvation is the recognition and acceptance of one's own bankruptcy of spirit. **Matthew 5:3-5**, “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **4** Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. **5** Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” The word “poor” is like the poverty of a beggar who has no money and can only beg for a living. He sits alone in a corner with his hands outstretched hoping for some kind soul to give him something. Whatever he receives, he receives with thankfulness and gratitude knowing that he is a beggar and deserves nothing from anyone. This description is applied to the sinner's heart! Before any salvation or deliverance from the bondage of sin that binds a sinner's heart, he must first admit that he is a chief of sinners before the holy God. His sins are so full and grievous that he admits that he deserves death and hell. He must admit with all sincerity that he has sinned greatly against God. It is not just against man that is the focus. For the sin against man he can make his own restitution with that man. It is the sin against God that he has no way to make any restitution to restore his relationship. He remains an enemy of God. With this sincere recognition of his sinful condition before God he will be led by God to salvation whereby he will one day inherit God's kingdom.

Then he mourns for his sins before God. The mourning is not a mere apology or feeling sorry. It is one of deep grieving to the point of wailing for the sins that he now admits that he has sinned against the holy God. This is turning to God in repentance and not like the tears and grief experienced by Judas Iscariot which was superficial, for it resulted in suicide! Judas' grief was man-centred whereas Peter's and all genuine believers' grief is God-centred, resulting in

forgiveness from God through Christ. The latter turns to God, the former turns to self-pity! The truly repentant sinner cries to God for help in all humility. He will be comforted by God in the Person of Jesus Christ who died for his sins. He humbly comes to Christ and in all sincerity accepts Him as his Lord and Saviour. **Romans 10:9-11** "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. **10** For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. **11** For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Salvation is assured when he turns to Christ humbly as a broken sinner pleading for God's grace to save Him in Christ. This is the meekness before God that will bring salvation into his soul. He will live forever and one day inherit the earth as a child of God, in the new heaven and new earth!

What a wonderful deliverance from the suffering brought about by sin, the sinful master!

II. Life that Produces Suffering – 5:6-8

The new life in Christ that every believer lives will be characterised by holiness and godliness. The Bible describes it this way in **Mathew 5:6-8**, "Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. **7** Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. **8** Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God." There is a transformation in the believer because he is now a new creature in Christ. There is a new hunger and thirst in him that was not there before. He used to lust after the things of the flesh but now he has a spiritual hunger and thirst after righteousness. All things righteous are a delight to him. Conversely all things evil and wicked are hateful to him. He now avoids them like the plague whereas once he was a slave to them. New friends, new places and new activities that are characterised by righteousness appeal to him greatly. The reverse was true in the past. Going to the movies on Sunday with friends is now replaced by going to church every Lord's Day. The thrill of being with God's people in worship is the high point of every week in his new life. He can't wait to dive into this new experience where everything around him brings inward joy that he did not experience before. Singing of hymns and prayer, reading and hearing God's Word preached and taught, have become the most important new experiences in his life. The attractions of the world have lost its glitter. He realizes that the world's treasure is like fools gold with all its surface glitter that is worthless dung underneath. It kills and consumes his soul and time like canker. He is extremely thankful to his God for opening his eyes and planting into his being this new hunger and thirst that was not there before. His strong desires for all things righteous will be filled by God. This will soon shape him and mould him into a holy witness for Christ.

This witness is also characterised by mercies. He will show mercy to all he meets regardless of how unjustly he may be treated. There is no desire for vengeance or a pound of flesh but only a righteous desire to do good and show mercy. Mercy is to withhold a punishment that is deserved. When others hurt him, he turns the other cheek. He will do what the Lord teaches him in **Matthew 5:38-45** "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: **39** But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. **40** And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also. **41** And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. **42** Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. **43** Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. **44** But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; **45** That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." He knows that these teachings refer to

his personal enemies and not the enemies of God. He needs to show the love of Christ in his life now. Just as Christ suffered and died for him, he now obeys God and will suffer for Christ and even die for Him. He does this out of the purity of his heart. There is no hidden agenda for self-glory or benefit. It is purely for the glory of God so that the people around him will see Christ in his life. He will tell them about Christ because he loves Christ with all his whole being. All he wants to do is to promote Christ. Christ must now increase more and more in his life and he will decrease accordingly. He knows that this is the life that God wants him to live in relation to others. This is the life that will end in the presence of God where he will see, i.e. gaze with eyes wide open at the amazingly glory of God in heaven! This is his blessed hope and greatest longing, to be home with God one day when his work for Christ is done.

III. Delivered For Suffering – 5:9-12

When the child of God lives a life described in Matthew 5:6-8, he will be hated by the world and the god of this world. They will try their utmost to snuff out such a glorious life of righteousness and godliness. Sinners will be able to see Christ clearly in the lives of these citizens of God who are serving Him on earth. To diminish these holy witnesses, evil ones will seduce and persecute them with all the powers of the devil at their disposal! These holy ones will suffer for Christ now which they were not able to do before salvation. Since all believers are to live the life described in Matthew 5:6-8, they will definitely suffer. It is a matter of intensity and frequency.

A life of holiness as the evidence of their salvation is the best and only life to carry the gospel to the uttermost part of the world as Christ commanded all believers to do. The power of the gospel is seen in the lives of these evangelists! They will be mightily used by God to save sinners. They are called peacemakers by God. They bring the gospel to sinners so that these sinners can make peace with God through Christ. Satan and his minions will stand in their way. They will be persecuted for being the peacemakers of God. This is one of the clearest evidence that they are children of God, for they are doing the will of God. **Matthew 5:9-12** teaches, “Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. **10** Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. **12** Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

Just because they are peacemakers of God does not mean that they will be loved by the people of the world. In fact the opposite is true. They will be hated by the world more than ever before. Hence, the LORD in the Sermon on the Mount prepared all believers by teaching them that they will all be persecuted. When they live and witness for Christ they will be persecuted for righteousness' sake and not for wrong doing. They will possess the kingdom of heaven. [NOTE: the first beatitude begins with the same phrase as the last . . . “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”] The use of this same phrase ties together all the beatitudes into one complete whole. The beatitudes basically describe the entire journey of the believer on earth from the beginning when he accepted Christ to the day he is called home to glory. It will be a life of persecution to the very end for all believers, without exception.

The LORD knows the difficulty of persecution. The beatitude on persecution is the only beatitude that receives double blessings. Believers will receive persecution in three ways. They will be reviled, i.e. defamed or rebuked. They will be persecuted, i.e. physically hurt and abused. They will be falsely accused by their enemies. These have to be experienced for Jesus' sake. If it is not for Christ's sake, then it will not be called suffering for Christ. The encouragement from the LORD is to rejoice (be calmly happy within), followed by being exceedingly glad, i.e. to jump for joy (a visible happiness like one who sings hymns of praise to God). It is not a masochistic glee, for

persecution is painful and it hurts. It is a hope-filled happiness because the final home of heaven awaits the believer who lives and suffers for Christ's sake. These believers must also realize that they are part of a wonderful company of prophets who lived before them and who were also persecuted for Christ.

The life of suffering is for all believers in both the Old and New Testaments.

APPLICATION -- Suffering for sin remains in the believer's life because his life is not sinless perfection. As long as he is in this earthly tabernacle, he will still fall into sin. But he can and must repent and return to the LORD and the path of righteousness. **1 John 1:8-10** "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

However, there is a new suffering that was not present before salvation. It is the suffering for Christ. He can now witness for Christ as a child of God which means that he will also be able to suffer for Christ. To be able to suffer for the Son of God is the greatest privilege God could ever bestow to any of His creatures. He did not give this privilege to angels but only to His children. Let us not be ashamed when God counts us worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. May God strengthen His people to be strong in the Lord and be ever prepared to suffer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you were asked: "Why must God's children, who are so powerful in Christ, suffer on earth as part of their witness for Christ?" what would your answer be?
2. What kinds of suffering for Christ are you most afraid of and will probably cause you great grief?
3. What is the best way to be prepared for suffering for Christ (in case it comes suddenly)?
4. Should a believer deliberately do certain things in his life so that he can suffer for Christ? Is it wrong to "escape" from the suffering if a way of escape is presented to the believer?
5. What kind of strength is needed to face suffering?