

Righteous Suffering

- A. Definitions.
1. righteousness: Justice, uprightness, rectitude; conformity of life to the requirements of the divine or moral law; virtue, integrity.
 2. suffer: *trans.* To have (something painful, distressing, or injurious) inflicted or imposed upon one; to submit to with pain, distress, or grief.
 3. persecution: The action of persecuting or pursuing with enmity and malignity; *esp.* the infliction of death, torture, or penalties for adherence to a religious belief or an opinion as such, with a view to the repression or extirpation of it; the fact of being persecuted; an instance of this.
- B. Scripture has much to say about righteous suffering. **MAT 5:10-12; 1PE 3:9-14.**
- C. Life in this fallen world is full of trouble (**JOB 14:1**): bodily, mental, emotional, relational, financial, temptations to sin, political, war, etc. There is no such thing as life without suffering.
- D. Much of life's suffering is part of the bondage of corruption that rules the entire creation and to which all creatures are subject, to which all men are subject. **ROM 8:20-22.**
1. There is suffering owing to ignorance.
 2. There is suffering owing to accident.
 3. There is suffering owing to flawed decisions.
 4. There is suffering stemming from work.
 5. There is suffering stemming from adherence to principle.
 6. There is suffering imposed by others.
 7. All men contend with such. The man without principles or the man who won't work should be made to suffer by natural consequences or by law.
PSA 107:17; PRO 19:15; 2TH 3:10.
- E. Men in a general sense may suffer for well-doing.
1. They may by wisdom, industry, and thrift make a better life for themselves than others, breeding envy in some (**ECC 4:4**) which can make good men the target of slander, robbery, violence, higher taxes, penalties for merit and good credit, etc.
 2. The man who avoids pitfalls of wicked habits or behaviors may be despised by the one who has given himself to such things. **PSA 38:20; PRO 29:27.**
 3. Wicked men will do what wicked men do: plot against just men. **PSA 37:12.**
 4. The man who puts himself in the way of danger for a good cause may suffer for that.
PRO 24:11-12; JOB 29:17 c/w ROM 5:7-8; 16:4.
 5. The man who puts himself at risk to supply for his own need or that of his household is in a righteous pursuit and may suffer as a result. **1TI 5:8.**
 6. Anything which men do which God has ordained as good for the sons of men (**ECC 2:3**) which causes them to suffer is in this broad sense righteous suffering.
 7. The cost of doing good for any man is in the long run cheaper than choosing evil.
ECC 8:12-13.
- F. We are to differentiate between suffering for doing well and suffering for our faults.
1PE 2:20; 3:15-17; 4:14-16.
- G. The highest form of righteous suffering is what one undergoes for adhering to God, His word, His Son, etc.
1. This is suffering for conscience' sake pertaining to the invisible God. The first innocent blood shed on earth was over religious fidelity. **1JO 3:12.**
 2. The blood of martyrs has ever been and is before God. **MAT 23:34-36; REV 6:9-11.**
 3. We are called to be faithful unto death. **REV 2:10; LUK 14:26.**
- H. Identifying fully with Jesus Christ is the most offensive thing imaginable to a wicked world. This

world will honor one who suffers for good causes pertaining to fellow-men but it will draw the line on one who is committed to the invisible Son of God when His principles are contrary to the way men think. The world will tolerate a helpless Jesus in a cradle or hanging on a cross but not when He demands His principles be higher than theirs.

1. There will be a price to pay for true identifying. **2TI 3:12.**
2. Christ promised that the world would hate His true disciples as it hated Him. **JOH 15:17-20 c/w 1JO 3:13.**
3. Even unbelievers who are otherwise “good” men may cause Christians to suffer (and in fact can be their fiercest oppressors). **JOH 16:1-3 c/w PHIL 3:4-6.**
4. There will be sub-fatal sufferings for identifying with Christ. **HEB 10:32-34; 1PE 4:1-6.**
5. All such sufferings for Christ must be deemed as the true pleasures and riches. **HEB 11:24-27; PHIL 3:7-9.**

I. One of the best losses for righteousness sake is the sin which ruins us. **HEB 12:1.**

J. Summary.

1. All men may suffer for righteous/good acts. Let us not be despisers of such. **2TI 3:3.**
2. This may be as simple as injuries in the line of work.
3. Sufferings may be the result of our own faulty decisions which were done without malice.
4. We cannot claim persecution for Christ’s sake in general righteous works any more than an unbeliever could claim such.
5. Suffering for the name of Christ, His gospel, etc. is the purest form of righteous suffering.
6. No sufferings compare with the future glory. **ROM 8:18.**