

“Suffering and the Will of God”

1 Thess. 3:1-5

The Sufficiency of His Grace for the Sustaining of His Suffering People

The suffering of God’s people is part of His plan for their lives.

We know from Acts 17:1ff that the church in Thessalonica was birthed in the cauldron of persecution. When Paul was driven from the city, the persecution of God’s people did not stop. Paul refers to this in 1:6 and 2:14-16.

This text is revealing. Twice we hear the statement of God’s plan for affliction. He says, “We have been destined for this,” and “we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction.” Both statements are telling. The affliction we suffer is part of God’s will for our lives.

I. Suffering is intrinsic or native to sin
(Genesis 3:11-19; Rom. 6:23; 5:12; James 1:15).

II. Suffering is used by God as a means to an end
(John 9:3; James 1:12; Job 23:10).

God’s purpose in all of our difficulties is to display the image of His Son on the canvas of our lives. God always sees the moment in light of His plan.

III. Suffering is by divine appointment (1 Thess. 3:3-5; John 15:20-23; 16:1-3; Acts 9:15, 16; 14:21, 22; 2 Tim. 3:12).

Suffering for the believer is not optional. It is part of the Christian life. We have avoided it in our present culture, but in light of all that is transpiring, persecution is coming.

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APPLICATION (Making the Transfer):

In light of these three truths, what should be my attitude in the midst of suffering?

1. Rejoice in it (Matt. 5:12; James 1:2).
2. Be patient under it (1 Cor. 4:12).
3. Glorify God by it (1 Peter 4:16).
4. Pray during it (Matt. 5:44).
5. Realize that God has provided a means of deliverance through it (1 Cor. 10:11-13).
He will provide a way of escape.
6. Realize that God's strength is manifested in your weakness (2 Cor. 12:7-10).
7. Realize that God only does good (James 1:13, 17; Gen. 50:20).
8. Realize that God is in control (1 Chron. 29:11, 12).