

The Bible Promises These 5 Rewards if You're Suffering for Christ

A man came to his pastor and said, "Pastor, would you please pray that God will give me patience?"

Two weeks later, he returned and said, "Good grief, Pastor! Terrible things are happening to me. My life's coming unglued."

"Well," replied the pastor, "you wanted patience. The Bible says, 'Tribulation works patience,' so I prayed for tribulation. God must be answering my prayer."

Although persecution is inflicted by enemies of God, He can use it to mold us into greater Christlikeness. As Paul told us, "We also boast in tribulation, knowing that tribulation produces patience, patience produces character, and character produces hope" (Rom. 5:3–4). Contrary to what we often hear, the call to follow Christ is not a call to an easy life.

As John Ortberg put it, "God isn't at work producing the circumstances I want. God is at work in bad circumstances to produce the me he wants."

Suffering Provokes Courage

Courage reflects Christ's character in adverse circumstances. It is the crucial virtue that Christians must deploy when facing cultural demands that conflict with biblical teaching.

The apostles Peter and John faced such a demand when the Jewish leaders hauled them into court and told them to cease preaching Christ. Peter and John replied, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot help but declare what we have seen and

heard" (Acts 4:19–20).

After Paul's conversion, his life became a sterling example of this kind of courage. As he wrote to the Philippians, "It is my earnest expectation and my hope that I shall be ashamed in nothing, but that with all boldness as always, so now also, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me, to continue living is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:20–21).

Suffering Proves Godliness

A.W. Tozer wrote, "To be right with God has often meant to be in trouble with men." As Paul put it, "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). It's a matter of simple logic: Why would the enemies of Christianity bother anyone who is not displaying the nature of Christ?

The writer of Hebrews said, "Whom the Lord loves He disciplines" (Heb. 12:6a). D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote, "If you are suffering as a Christian, and because you are a Christian, it is one of the surest proofs you can ever have of the fact that you are a child of God."

Suffering Produces Joy

When we realize the purpose and positive results of suffering persecution, it can become a source of joy, as it was for Paul and Silas when they encountered opposition. In Acts 16:22–24, they were arrested, beaten and thrown into prison. Then we read, "At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."

These disciples, beaten and imprisoned without a trial, were so joyful they burst into song! This tells us that the source of joy is our relationship with God, and that relationship is affirmed when we courageously endure persecution.

Suffering Provides Rewards

The Scriptures abound with promises of rewards for those who endure suffering. Often we allow these future rewards to be obscured by immediate gratifications. Moses could easily have allowed the immediate to obscure the distant. Raised as a prince in Egypt's royal palace, he had access to riches, pleasure, status and power. But the Bible tells us, "By faith Moses ... refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a time. He esteemed the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he looked to the reward" (Heb. 11:24–26).

Moses was willing not only to turn his back on immediate pleasure, position and power but also to suffer affliction in order to receive the promised eternal reward.

What are some of the rewards promised to those who endure persecution?

1. They will be avenged (Rev. 6:9–11, 16:5–7, 18:20, 19:2).
2. They will be given perfect and abundant lives free of sorrow (7:14–17).
3. They will find eternal rest (14:13).
4. They will receive the crown of eternal life (James 1:12).
5. They will have no more death to fear (1 Cor. 15:54, Rev. 20:14).

These are just a few of the rewards that await those who suffer persecution for Christ's sake. Paul wrote, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18).

This is an adaptation from Dr. Jeremiah's latest book, The Book of Signs.

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Listen to find out how Pastor Jack Deere turned his suffering into an opportunity to grow as a friend of God.