

The QBC Daily Nugget March 1, 2010

“The Rules of the Lord are true and righteous. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9b-10a)

1 PETER 4:1 - Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: **RESPONDING TO SUFFERING**. Today’s topic is an “un” topic. It is an unpleasant, an undesirable, and an unavoidable thing in life. Now you may opt to stop reading any further which means you have avoided reading about the topic, but you will not be able to avoid living out the topic. Suffering. It knows no partiality in the human race. It does not care where we live or our economic status. Suffering is the given lot to all born into this world. Job got it right with these words, “Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble” (**JOB 14:1**).

When it comes to being a Christian, suffering doesn’t just “happen” to us. Suffering is given to us. Actually, it is considered a gift from God to us. Yes, I know that is a hard pill to swallow that suffering is a gift from God. Salvation a gift from God? Great! We embrace that for sure. The blessings of His care for us? Our arms are all around those with grateful hearts, but what about the gift of suffering? Paul wrote to the Philippians these words, “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (**PHILIPPIANS 1:29**). The word “granted” means to “freely give, to graciously grant, to bestow.” So we would rewrite **PHILIPPIANS 1:29** like this, “For it has been freely given, graciously granted, and richly bestowed to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake.” That might shake up some theology out there which wants to avoid or dismiss from the Christian life any thoughts of suffering. The gift of believing in Christ is something very desirous. The gift of suffering for Christ might not be as desirous. Paul goes even further. He wants this gift of suffering – “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (**PHILIPPIANS 3:10**). He knew that to truly experience the fullness of fellowship with the Lord Jesus, suffering was part of the package. There is no glorious crown of reward in the next life without the painful cross of suffering in this life. It isn’t just the Apostle Paul who understood the proper role suffering plays in Christian thinking and living. Allow the Apostle Peter to drive it home also, “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps” (**1 PETER 2:21**). God not only gives us the gift of suffering but calls us to it in order to identify with His Son.

Suffering is non-optional in the Christian life. Responses to suffering, though, does offer us options. Consider three. First, we may rebel against suffering. This is a very serious and wrong response. It makes us unlike our Lord who willingly embraced suffering to do the Father’s will (**MATTHEW 26:39**). The second option is to grudgingly submit to the suffering given by God. This, too, is a very serious and wrong response. It makes us “Christianized Pharisees” simply submitting to the externals of Christianity while our hearts act out a “spiritual temper tantrum” against the suffering God has designed for our good. The final response, and only correct response, is to see suffering as a tool of the Lord to increase our holiness and then learn to praise Him with thanksgiving for the suffering. This isn’t easy to do and only the Christian knowing the power and intimacy of the Holy Spirit will get to that point in the heart. David got there when he wrote this proper understanding and approach toward suffering – “I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me” (**PSALM 119:75**). And earlier in **PSALM 119**, he knew the value of his suffering – “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes” (**PSALM 119:71**). Let’s respond to suffering like Paul, Peter and David!

PRAYER: “Lord, help me to enter into Your sufferings as an evidence of my adoption.”

QUOTE: “Suffering refused or rebelled against is an act of disobedience toward God.”