



Berean Christian Fellowship

DEVOTIONAL 86.0

September 17
2015

Suffering Persecution by the Devil

“Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name” (1 Peter 4:16).

We often take this verse to refer to our suffering persecution at the hands of men for our testimony, but what about our suffering directly at the hands of the devil? We so often fail to see his persecution of us in the suffering of our daily lives, but with every difficulty and challenge, satan is there in the midst of it, accusing us, accusing God, and tempting us to take matters into our own hands (in the last Devotional, we saw that temptation is persecution). When we struggle with anxiety, fear, health difficulties, pain, betrayal, conflicts, etc, these are more than physical, mental, or emotional difficulties, because satan wields them as weapons to attack our trust in who God has made us (His Children), our trust in the goodness of our Heavenly Father, and our trust in His will (not our will) to meet our needs. We sometimes say, “Why is this happening? Is something wrong with me? With Him? Do I need to take matters into my own hands?”

Jesus was no stranger to persecution in suffering, for God saw it fitting He “*should make the founder of [our] salvation perfect through suffering*” (Hebrews 2:10), and Isaiah prophesied people would be astonished by Jesus, because “*His appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and His form beyond that of the children of mankind*” (Isaiah 52:14). Jesus suffered physically, emotionally, and mentally, “*a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*” (Isaiah 53:3b), for He “*had to be made like His brethren in all things...For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted*” (Hebrews 2:17-18). Every-

thing Jesus suffered, whether hunger, pain, rejection, perhaps disease and disfigurement, involved persecution of the acutest kind at the hands of the devil. Consider that when Jesus was in the wilderness, satan used His suffering by hunger as a weapon, attacking His nature (accusing Him), saying, “*if you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread*” (Matthew 4:3b). Satan also took advantage of His emotional weakness, attacking God’s nature, casting doubt as to whether God would (or could) save Him if He jumped off the Temple (planting doubt in God). Finally, the devil used Jesus’ mental exhaustion to attack His trust in God’s will (and plan) by offering a “better deal” - immediate gratification without suffering, only requiring Jesus to act on His own will to “save” Himself.

Jesus’ responded by affirming His trust in the Word of God concerning Himself, saying man shall live “*by every word that comes from the mouth of God*” (Matthew 4:4b) - We too should affirm what Scripture says about us when satan attacks our identity. Jesus also affirmed His trust in what the Word says about God’s nature, that we should not doubt He is Who He is (Matthew 4:7). Finally, Jesus affirmed His trust in God’s will and plan for our lives, for He said, “*I seek not My own will but the will of Him who sent Me*” (John 5:30b).

In like manner, everything that we endure as Believers is suffering for our Faith (aside from the results of sin) because it involves persecution from the devil: “*when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God*” (1 Peter 2:20b).

In His suffering, Jesus lived by the Word of God (trusting His Father’s Word) and withdrew often to pray to His Father by Himself. May we also recognize the devil’s persecution of our faith in what we suffer, looking to Jesus for our response in times of difficulty. Amen.