

# The Potter's Christian Life Center

SERMON NOTES  
with Pastor Greg Formey



## The Strange And Wonderful Truth About Suffering

**1 Peter 4:12-16**

Sunday, October 9, 2016

How can we truly thrive spiritually if we are under the assumption that the only reason we go through hard times is because we have fallen out of favor with God? Yet, some have believed that this is true. They are convinced that suffering is always the result of sin, a lack of faith, or the anger of God.

### WHY WE THINK SUFFERING IS STRANGE

If this were true, each time we suffer, we would have to ask, "Why me?" or, "What have I done?" The faith of many Christians is compromised because they view trouble in this way.

**1 Corinthians 4:9-13**

**"...I sometimes think God has put us apostles on display, like prisoners of war at the end of a victor's parade, condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the entire world—to people and angels alike. <sup>10</sup>Our dedication to Christ makes us look like fools, but you claim to be so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are so powerful! You are honored, but we are ridiculed. <sup>11</sup>Even now we go hungry and thirsty, and we don't have enough clothes to keep warm. We are often beaten and have no home. <sup>12</sup>We work wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us. <sup>13</sup>We appeal gently when evil things are said about us. Yet we are treated like the world's garbage, like everybody's trash—right up to the present moment.**

If these men did not understand suffering, then they would have never endured to the end. If all they could expect in life was suffering and death, how could they have kept pressing on if they did? Even Paul stated that if there was no eternal hope, they should eat, drink, and live it up until their time to die.

Instead, in **Acts 5:41**, we see the exact opposite in the lives of the apostles after they were persecuted before the Jewish leaders.

**"The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus."**

## **WHY SUFFERING IS NOT STRANGE**

Which is a greater blessing, a life free of trouble with no eternal reward, or suffering that is made more than worth it because of the fulfilled promises of God? The truth is, where there are no storms, life has no depth. When you find someone who has never suffered, you will quickly see that they have a very shallow and self-centered perspective on life. By our human nature, we think that prosperity alone is a blessing. Sometimes it is, but so is suffering if we encounter it with the right attitude.

### **1 Peter 4:12-16**

**<sup>12</sup>Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; <sup>13</sup>but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. <sup>14</sup>If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. <sup>15</sup>But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. <sup>16</sup>Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.**

**<sup>19</sup>Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.**

This passage flies in the face of what most of us have always been taught. Scripture teaches that when we experience trouble as a result of following Jesus, the Holy Spirit shows up in a special way. It may feel like we are enduring a long, lonely road but in reality, God is taking us to a new depth of relating with Him.

### **Romans 5:3**

**We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. NLT**

### **Conclusion**

If I become bitter against God or against those who cause me pain, I replace the blessing of God in my life for self-pity and anger. Hard times are a tragedy only if we are looking at them from our temporary circumstances. Their purpose is to refine and shape us into vessels of great value to the Lord. When I trust Him, He shapes me, and my trouble becomes a trophy of His grace.