

FROM GREAT SUFFERING TO GREAT GLORY!

God has already begun judging his own people. And if his judgment begins with us, imagine how terrible it will be for those who refuse to obey his message". I Peter 4:17 (CEV)

The Biblical record of Holy Week is one of great suffering and great glory. Peter had seen Christ's suffering and glory firsthand and related these events in his letters to the New Testament Christians. He also wrote about his own suffering as Christ's apostle and the glory he would experience after death. He tells us that this is the legacy Christ has left for his people: *"If you suffer for obeying God, you must have complete faith in your faithful Creator and keep on doing right"* (I Peter 4:19). Peter knew that he must prepare Christians for the suffering they would endure.

Life was not pleasant in Peter's day. Cruel Nero was killing Christians in huge numbers, and these believers assumed that they would suffer for their faith. Peter was encouraging them to rejoice in their sufferings, because they would ultimately enjoy the glories of heaven with Christ. He also reminds them that unbelievers will not escape judgment, suffering separation from God for eternity.

We may not suffer today as these early believers did centuries ago, but we need to be ready to give an account of our faith without hesitation. We deny our Savior if we remain silent. We may suffer no more than ridicule or rejection today for expressing our faith, but as the world becomes increasingly hostile to Christianity, we may be punished or imprisoned for acknowledging Christ. Whatever our future sufferings may be, we must never fail to declare that Jesus is our Savior and King. We claim this promise: *"Everyone will hate you because of me. But if you remain faithful until the end, you will be saved"* (Matthew 10:22).

We can rejoice as a church family that we are called to be Christ's faithful witnesses. It is our privilege to proclaim Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection as we celebrate Easter!

Our prayer: *We thank you, Jesus, for Your great suffering on our behalf, for the salvation that You have brought to Your people. Your death and resurrection have transformed our lives and given us hope for the future. We rejoice in knowing that You are reigning over heaven and earth as our King. Enliven us as we tell the story of salvation and empower our words by the work of Your Holy Spirit. In Your name we pray, Amen.*

Dalyne Shinneman