

(1 Peter 2:19-25, NIV84)

For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

How often don't we feel put upon by people or circumstances that surround us -- "Oh woe is me!?" Our lives are filled with varying degrees of suffering, but the only suffering that can specifically be considered Christian-suffering is the suffering that comes due to the fact that we are Christians. And even then we are not to take the "oh woe is me" attitude.

If we ever get to feeling like we're suffering too much, reflect once again on the words of St. Peter written above. In the person of Jesus Christ we see the supreme height of suffering, and the supreme height of endurance. What a great example for us to follow. Here we might well remember these words from the hymn My Song Is Love Unknown:

Here might I stay and sing; No story so divine,
Never was love, dear King, Never was grief like thine.
This is my friend, In whose sweet praise
I all my days Could gladly spend!

If we were to suffer each day for our faith in Jesus, we could never match His grace or humility in suffering. Yet, amazingly, Jesus doesn't demand that we match Him to merit His love. He willingly endured all that He suffered to win for us salvation.

Even now, in the midst of whatever suffering we experience, Jesus is with us to comfort and defend, strengthen and uphold us. He truly is a friend like no other, who loves us with an unfathomable love. In your suffering, rest in that knowledge.

Resting with you in Christ,
Pastor Golm

May 31

Meekness

The fruit of the Spirit is . . . meekness. Galatians 5:23

Let's admit it. There are times when we feel that we cannot afford to be meek-cannot afford to be humble and of a lowly spirit. After all, we have so many things to boast about, so many accomplishments to our credit. How will our friends ever know about them if we don't at least whisper them from the housetops?

Yes, there are times when like the lonely desert flower in Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard", we feel that we have been "born to blush unseen, And waste our fragrance on the desert air". The fear of being unnoticed, unheralded, and unsung is a universal human trait-but definitely not a "fruit of the Spirit".

Simon Peter had such fears. And every time he tried to overcome them by asserting his own virtues, he made a sorry mess of things. But Simon Peter learned his lesson. It was an altogether different Simon who in later years wrote: "Be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble."

Robert Louis Stevenson once said to a friend: "The most dangerous height I ever climbed was Mount Ego." The great church father St. Augustine once exclaimed: "Should you ask me, What is the first thing in religion? I should reply, The first, the second, the third thing-nay, all-is humility!"

Let us, then, be done with silly pride and shallow boasting. As we contemplate the unsearchable love of him who humbled himself for us, even to the death of the cross, let us say with the poet:

When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

God be merciful to me, a sinner, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

(Devotion from: Daily Walk With God - Meditations for Every Day, by Herman W. Gockel)