

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, is carrying a large, dark wooden cross on her back. She is walking on a paved sidewalk, looking upwards and to the right with a determined expression. The background is a blurred street scene with a car and other people. The overall tone is somber and reflective.

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

Lesson 6 for May 6, 2017

There are many types of suffering, but the focus of Peter's first letter is **SUFFERING FOR CHRIST.**

Since Peter's time, accepting Christ may involve suffering persecution, tribulation, affliction...

How should we confront those situations? How can we get consolation when suffering them?

- ✝ Suffering for Christ.
- ✝ Confronting suffering.
- ✝ The fire of suffering.
- ✝ Suffering and judgment.
- ✝ Faith amid suffering.

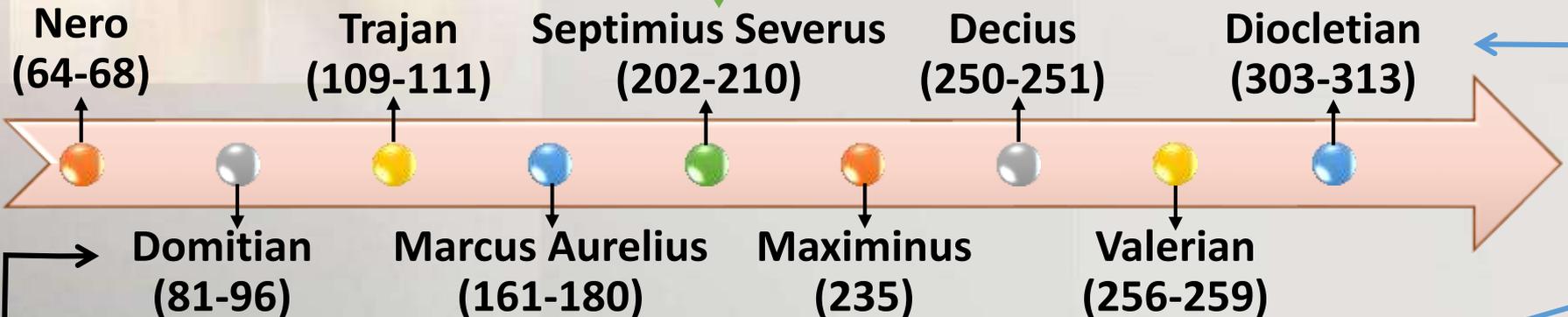


IMPERIAL PERSECUTION

According to Tacitus and Suetonius, Nero accused the Christians of causing Rome's fire.

During Septimius' reign, Clement of Alexandria wrote that "Many martyrs are daily burned, confined, or beheaded, before our eyes."

Pliny the Younger ordered the execution of some Christians and asked Trajan on what to do with them. He answered that "whoever denies that he is a Christian and really proves it by worshiping our gods" could be liberated. If not, they should be punished.



A law was enacted against Christians: "That no Christian, once brought before the tribunal, should be exempted from punishment without renouncing his religion."

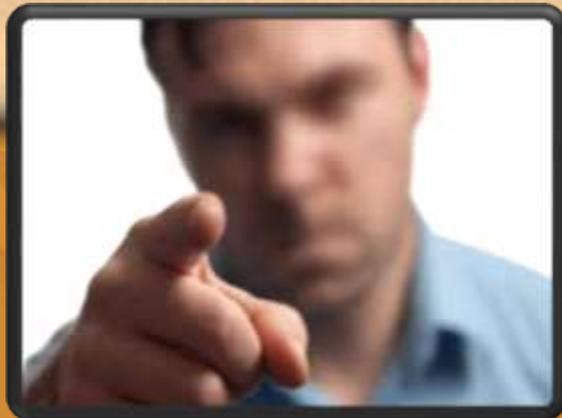
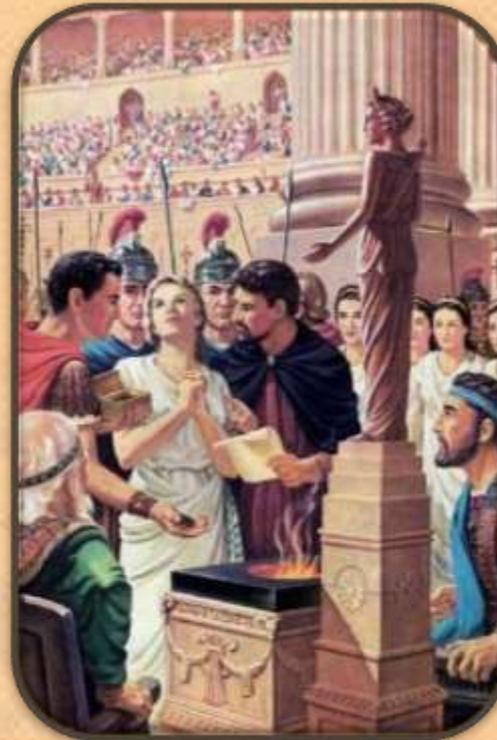
That persecution was so serious and long that it was called the "Age of martyrs" (Revelation 2:10).

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you." (1 Peter 5:10)

The Roman Empire considered Christianity questionable, because it went against the Empire's habits and vices. It wasn't an officially permitted religion until 313 AD.

Peter warned his audience: "if need be, you have been grieved by various trials." (1 Peter 1:6).



Those trials wouldn't only come from the Empire, but also from friends, neighbors and relatives. They could use false accusations, insult and dishonor to attack those who have decided to follow Christ.

CONFRONTING SUFFERING

"And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. 'And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.'" (1 Peter 3:13-14)

Peter recalls Jesus' Beatitude in Matthew 5:10. Then, he explains five guidelines to follow when suffering.

1. Don't be afraid of men, but sanctify God (v. 14-15).
2. Explain your hope with humbleness and reverence (v. 15).
3. Showing a good conduct so people cannot accuse us of anything (v. 16).
4. There is no merit in suffering for doing evil (v. 17).
5. We are following Christ's example when we suffer for doing right (v. 18).



THE FIRE OF SUFFERING

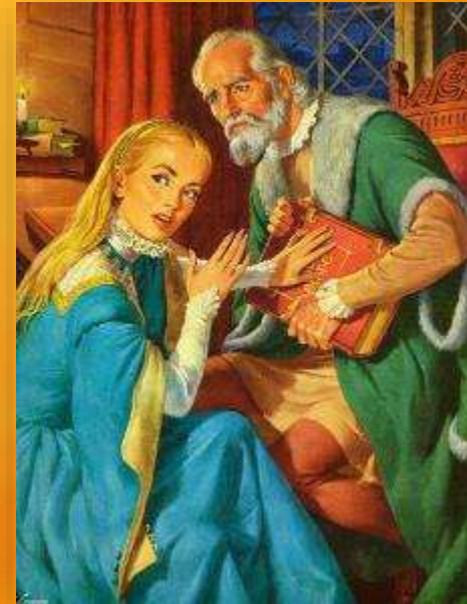
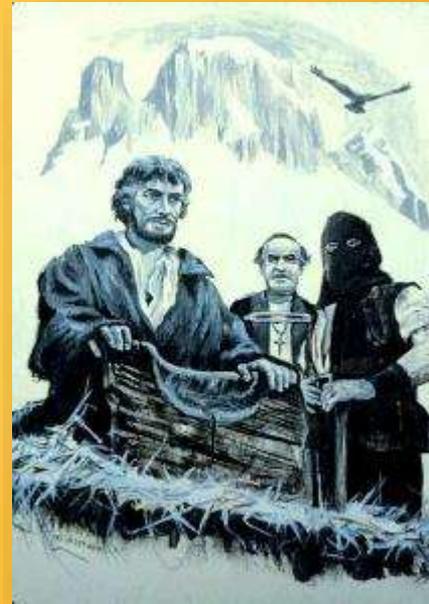
"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you... Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter." (1 Peter 4:12, 16)

Peter considers normal that the fire of trial is lit for Christians.

Paul said that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12)

Jesus also warned us (Matthew 24:9-10). After all, Jesus was persecuted, so His followers could be persecuted too (John 15:20).

Why do some people hate Jesus and His followers?



THE FIRE OF SUFFERING

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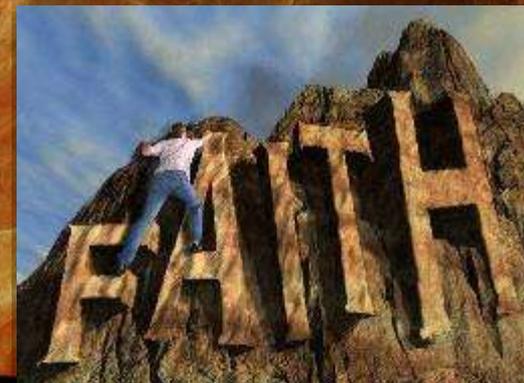
Revelation reads that “the dragon [Satan] was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring” (Rev. 12:17). The devil’s hate against Jesus is poured out on His followers.



On the other hand, that fire is able to purify, too (1 Peter 1:7).



Though one should never purposely bring on persecution, God can bring good out of it. Thus, Peter is telling his readers (and us): “Yes, persecution is bad, but don’t be discouraged by it as if it were something unexpected. Press on ahead in faith.”



SUFFERING AND JUDGMENT

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Peter reminds us of the Judgment that will begin at the house of God.

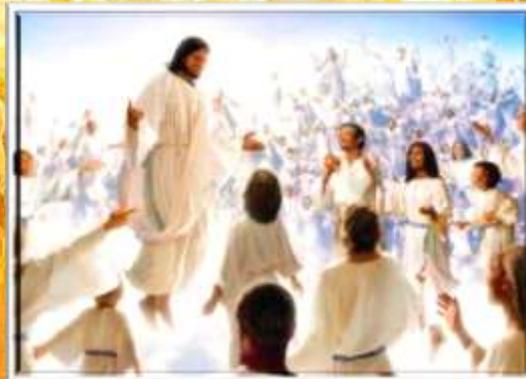
How is the Judgment related to our suffering?

Judgment shouldn't terrify us, but cheer us up. We will be vindicated and justice will be given our due. God will fix everything forever.

We must long for the judgment like the poor widow longed for justice (Luke 18:1-8).

As we take part on Christ's suffering, we will take part in His glory too (2 Timothy 2:12).

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17)



FAITH AMID SUFFERING

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

As we saw earlier, suffering “for the cause of justice” is caused by the Controversy between Christ and Satan.

Good men like Job suffered for no reason. Irrational hate against Christians is driven by the father of all evil, since the Roman emperors to today’s persecution in some parts of the world.

Even in those places where there is no official persecution, Christians suffer opposition. We are called to have strong faith in our Redeemer amid suffering. We must put ourselves in the Creator’s hands and do good.



“Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.” (1 Peter 4:19)

“Christ’s followers are accused as troublers of the people. But it is fellowship with God that brings them the world’s enmity. They are bearing the reproach of Christ. They are treading the path that has been trodden by the noblest of the earth. Not with sorrow, but with rejoicing, should they meet persecution. Each fiery trial is God’s agent for their refining. Each is fitting them for their work as colaborers with Him. Each conflict has its place in the great battle for righteousness, and each will add to the joy of their final triumph. Having this in view, the test of their faith and patience will be cheerfully accepted rather than dreaded and avoided. Anxious to fulfill their obligation to the world, fixing their desire upon the approval of God, His servants are to fulfill every duty, irrespective of the fear or the favor of men.”

E.G.W. (The Desire of Ages, cp. 31, pg. 306)