Daily Devotion #224

**Are You Surprised?**

**1 Peter 4:12-13 (NASB)** *“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.”*

Most people do not like pain and certainly not suffering of any kind. Our flesh, the human part of us, doesn’t like anything that causes us to feel hurt or pressure or any kind of emotional distress. That’s why most people spend their lives doing everything they can to avoid the difficulties of life and work hard to make life easier. In our country, and in many others, most people work for one reason - so they can have what they need to make life easier.

Can you imagine the surprise on the faces of those dear saints in Rome when they heard these words from Peter? I would imagine that the followers of Jesus, who were living in Rome at the time, were also looking for ways to make their lives easier and avoid suffering. In fact, most people have the belief that when they surrender their lives to Jesus, life will get better. Often that is what is taught by many so called teachers of God’s Word. But the reality is, God never promised that in this life things would get easier. Sure, there are many things that do get easier. Technology has helped us tremendously in that way. Right now, as I am writing this, our robotic vacuum is running around doing its thing without me having to lift a finger. But spiritually, God never said our lives on this earth would get easier. He said just the opposite. Listen to what the Lord said. **John 16:33 (NASB)** *"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."* **John 15:18-16:4 (NASB)** *"If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.”*

I heard a well known Pastor recently say to his congregation, “In this life we don’t win”. His point was in line with what Peter is saying. Our win, if you will, comes in the next life. For now, you and I are enemies of this world because we belong to Jesus. So as much as you and I and every believer wants to have a life of peace with the rest of the world, that won’t happen in this lifetime. So, Peter says, don’t be surprised when the world does things or says things to you and about you that are hurtful and go against everything you stand for in Jesus. What Peter wanted the Christians to keep in the forefront of their minds was they were aliens and strangers in this world and that no matter how “good” life gets here, we should not be surprised when we come under attack verbally or even physically or when our ideals are dismissed as crazy by the world.

What we should be is joyful, excited, and overwhelmed with the truth that God has saved us from the darkness of this world. We don’t have the physical victory yet, but we do have that victory spiritually. Paul said to the church in Rome, **Romans 8:29-30 (NASB)** *“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”* Jesus has won the battle for our souls. We have been bought with His death so that all who believe in Him will have the joy of being with Him in eternity forever. And one day, Jesus will come to get all who belong to Him. **1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NASB)** *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words*.”

We should be comforted. In fact, we should rejoice with a never-ending praise. Because we win for eternity. So, don’t be surprised by all that is happening, instead rejoice, and use your rejoicing as a witness to those who don’t have this hope.