

Suffering for What is Right

In His mercy, Jesus redeems our suffering. Some of the sorrow we submit to Him is not of particularly noble origins—it may be, as we have seen, the bad fruit of our sin, or the normal wounds and losses we sustain this side of Heaven.

He loves us to the extent that He will take every opportunity to invite us to surrender our sins and wounds. He grants us ‘cross-time’: an opportunity to receive and extend mercy. He makes us that much more fruitful in love.

But suffering for what is right: that is the highest form of suffering, and one to which the Christian seeking mature identification with the Crucified must aspire.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes: ‘The cross is suffering that comes only from our commitment to Jesus Christ...the cross is not the normal suffering tied to natural existence but the suffering tied to being Christian.’

That is what Jesus referred to in the Sermon on the Mount when He spoke of persecution for the sake of righteousness. (Matt. 5:10)

One of the ways in which I witness this suffering is for those who aspire to and proclaim healing from their homosexuality through the cross of Jesus Christ.

Early on in my own cross-walk, I recall an incident at a school where I worked. I had been good friends with a handful of employees there—we partied together and they knew of my homosexuality. When I became a Christian and expressed my desire to leave behind my old life, they banded together and started to ridicule my efforts to know Him more.

That began a rather long period of loneliness: being rejected by pagans and not yet knowing enough Christians who might help close the gap. It was tough; my only solace lie in believing that Jesus understood my dilemma and somehow was upholding me in it.

I see now and rejoice that I was suffering a little for what was right!

Peter illuminates this further: ‘It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil...But rejoice that you participate in Christ’s suffering, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed...If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or a thief or meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear His Name.’ (1P 3:17; 4:13-16)

About one year into my conversion, I sought help from a seminar at my university entitled ‘The Christian and Homosexuality.’ Every major denomination was represented, included a Catholic

priest.

Their one message? Jesus says it's OK to be gay. I knew they must be reading another Bible. Even as a babe in Christ, I had heeded Jesus' call to pick up my cross daily. I knew that had something to do with surrendering one's sexuality to Him. When I suggested this, they rejected my offering as foolish and irrelevant.

For them, the cross was foolishness, the image of God in humanity irrelevant. That response continues to be how the worldly church responds to those of us who proclaim healing from homosexuality.

To hear the words healing and homosexuality in the same breath prompts an irrational response from a church so intent on courting the 'world' that she gives up her inheritance—the truth that we all bear God's image as male and female. Regardless of our starting point, we each have the same chance to be reconciled to our true selves through surrender to Christ Crucified and Raised.

Our proclamation as 'ex-gays' that Jesus has given us a share in His suffering and in His image—that is glorious! And anathema to the worldly church that denies both the cross and the imago dei for homosexuals.

In the growing unwillingness of the church to stand her ground as the healing community for homosexuals, we behold the end-time battle between light and darkness, truth and deception, good and evil. All the more reason to proclaim through our very lives how Jesus heals the homosexual!

Of course we expect much of 'the world' to reject the healing of the homosexual. Throughout the globe, Living Waters gatherings have met with irrational, at times ferocious opposition for daring to invite homosexuals to the merciful cross. For this we are blessed: what a privilege to suffer for upholding what is right!

More difficult is the merciless church. Here I refer to conservative churches that reject those like us who aspire to live a cross-centered life and yet who know it is a lifetime quest marked by fits and starts, breakthroughs and setbacks. The merciless church refuses that process.

She tends to arbitrarily reject strugglers for setbacks, and frowns with embarrassment on those of us who must 'live out loud' in order to stay on track. The merciless church requires that we become liars, dishonest about how tough it is to remain true to Christ in an idolatrous world.

She intensifies the suffering of the weak; she withholds Jesus from those most in need of Him. For her lack of mercy, Christ will judge her, as surely as He will judge the worldly church for withholding that truth from the struggler.

We face persecution for proclaiming and blazing an authentic healing path for the homosexual; we

rejoice. For those of us who have suffered long due to sins and everyday wounds, we are privileged to know Christ in His suffering--that is, suffering for righteousness' sake.

My fine Australian friends, Ron and Ruth Brookman, proclaim together the healing God has wrought in his homosexuality and in their marriage. They take many chances to do so in both Christian and secular settings. They get flack from everyone—the worldly and merciless church, as well as the rage of gay pagans undone by the threat of healing.

Ron and Ruth children stand in the cross. They suffer for what is right, and have become mature spiritual adults. From their story the Gospel goes forth to a continent, and beyond. They know that if their message is hidden, it is hidden from those who are perishing. (2 Cor. 4:3)

'Whoever belongs to Christ must go the whole way with Him. He must mature to adulthood: he must one day walk the way of the cross from Golgotha to Gethsemene.

Will you remain faithful to the Crucified? Consider carefully! The world is in flames, the battle between Christ and the Anti-Christ has broken into the open. If you decide for Christ, it could cost you your life. Carefully consider what you promise.'

Edith Stein

'As You have shown us mercy, O God, in the desert places of our lives, would You show mercy to the beleaguered state of marriage in the USA? As the Perry vs. Schw. case wends its way to the National Supreme Court, prepare for Yourself a victory. We shall render to Caesar what is Caesar's but we shall prayerfully fight for what is Yours, O God. Prepare the hearts of each justice, especially Justice Anthony Kennedy, to uphold marriage according to Your merciful design. Remember mercy, O God.'