

Dear Friend,

When I was a young man growing up in this wonderful nation of the United States of America, the thought of "suffering for being a Christian" was pretty unknown to me. I knew missionaries often suffered and even died as martyrs as they took the gospel to foreign lands, but in America everybody (for the most part) considered Christianity to be right and good. I would read this passage in Peter's epistle and wonder what he meant:

**1Pe 4:14-16** **If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. (15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. (16) Yet if *any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.***

"If any man suffer as a Christian" ... and Peter was not really writing to missionaries in foreign lands in this letter, but to normal, everyday Christian believers. It was a different time in America all those decades ago as I pondered these things. America was, for the most part then, a Christian nation. But then America took prayer out of our schools. And then America justified the murder of innocent babies by the millions and calling abortion a woman's "right to choose." Most recently America has redefined marriage to include male with male and female with female.

In these modern times it is becoming more and more abundantly clear what Peter was talking about. Today it is very "politically incorrect" to stand up as a Christian and declare the truth of the gospel. In some other first world countries it is already the law of the land that declaring homosexuality to be a sin is "hate speech" and you can actually serve jail time just for declaring the truth of the bible. I have heard from friends who live in those lands it is dangerous just to read out loud in public from the first chapter of the book of Romans. Just to read it out loud in public! Incredible!

More and more Christians are being typified as bigots and haters because we will not agree with the ungodly, unscriptural laws being passed by the legislators of this land. It is not hate to declare sin to be sin. In fact, we are commanded as children of the light to expose and reprove every work of darkness. Yet today in this "politically correct" society you risk the loss of friends, perhaps the loss of your job, and perhaps legal action against you if you simply stand up and read publicly simple bible verses such as:

**1Co 6:9-10** **Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, (10) nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor**

**revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.** [New King James Version]

Young people in their twenties and thirties have been so indoctrinated by the "politically correct" principles of this modern age that when a minister tries to warn them that if they continue in fornication until they die they will not go to heaven, they give the minister either a look of fierce anger or a pitying look of condescension that he could still believe such old-fashioned things.

God's Word does not change with the times. God's Word is forever settled in heaven. It will never change. Jesus said heaven and earth would pass away but His words would never pass away. The verses I quoted above are just as much TRUTH today as they were when the apostle Paul first wrote them in his letter to the Corinthians.

There is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain. Most people laugh at such notions today. But our job is to speak the truth in love, no matter the friends we might lose, the jobs we might lose, the persecution that might come our way, and so forth. We are to be faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. To be faithful to Christ is to be faithful to the Word of God. There is no separating the two.

In our world today, it is very much possible to "suffer as a Christian." Peter said if that happens to you, do not be ashamed. But rather glorify God on this behalf. I pray each of us has the courage to stand up straight and be faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ to this generation, no matter the cost.

Sue and I love you and appreciate you. We thank God for your generous and giving heart. God bless you!

Your friend and co-laborer,

*GARY*