

Suffering Gladly in Messy Relationships

1 Corinthians 4; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 3-6-2022

Introduction: Messy Relationships

The Apostle Paul had a messy relationship with the Corinthian believers. He suffered much in his relationship with the Church at Corinth. In his suffering with this church, we can see our own sufferings. (2 Corinthians 2:4; 11:11; 12:15) Relationships are messy and if we are going to love as God does, we have to love in *messy relationships*: relationships that are hard and bring suffering of various kinds.

What kinds of suffering might we have to endure for the good of relationships and even in good relationships, in a fallen world?

1. The Suffering of Misjudgment (1-5)

- It is a very small thing that I may be examined by you (3) = like a prosecuting attorney ('process of critical examination' – Morris; 'Brings me before his court for interrogation' - Barrett)
- Human court (3) = human day (of judgment)
- I do not examine myself (3) = seek to render final judgment on myself
- I am conscious of nothing against myself (4) = not as a sinner but as an apostle
- Do not go on passing judgment before the time (5) = don't seek to render a final judgment on others before the time of the Final Judgment of God ('do not reach any verdict' – Barrett)
- Bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts (5) = we can't render final judgment on anyone, including ourselves, because we don't know all things done by people or the motives for what people do ('throw light upon the things hidden in darkness' – Barrett; this also could be a parallelism where the first part is explained by the second part)

The Promise of Peace (Romans 5:1; Romans 8:31)

Leave the Final Judgment to God (5) - Mark 10:17-31

2. The Suffering of Disrespect (6-10)

- Who regards you as superior? (7) = why are you different than others? ('put a difference between' – Morris)
- Boast as if you had not received it (7) = gifts of grace are undeserved and no basis for pride
- Filled, rich, kings (8) = these believers thought they had arrived and had excelled by far those like Paul
- You are prudent, strong, distinguished (10) = this is how they view themselves, but they are wrong in their judgments of themselves and of Paul

The Promise of Provision (Romans 5:2a; Philippians 4:13, 19)

Don't Boast About Gracious Gifts You Don't Deserve (7) – Daniel 4:29-32

3. The Suffering of Rejection (11-16)

- Hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, homeless (11) = lacking in material and daily necessities; homeless means without a permanent residence, not necessarily on the streets ('no settled abode' – Morris)
- Roughly treated (11) = 'buffeted' is 'to strike with the fist' (Morris)
- Reviled (12) = 'to abuse, revile'; to make fun of and light of; indirect attack on one's character
- Bless (12) = speak well of or wish well for or invoke blessings upon
- Persecuted (12) = 'to pursue, persecute'; pursue for harm
- Endure (12) = to hold up under and bear with
- Slandered (13) = 'to slander, defame'; to boldly and directly attack one's character
- Conciliate (13) = encourage and exhort and comfort (or speak kindly)

The Promise of Pleasure (Romans 5:2b; Psalm 16:11)

The Promise of Purpose (Romans 5:3-4; James 1:2-4)

Respond Don't React (12-13, 16) – John 13:1-19

4. The Suffering of Uncertainty (17-21)

- The kingdom of God (20) = the spiritual kingdom consisting of all those who have repented and believed in King Jesus
- What do you desire? (21) = a call to repentance and to take his coming back seriously
- With a rod or with love (21) = it is clear that the proper use of a rod is love so the contrast here is not between love and hate, but between tough love (reproof and rod) and tender love (spirit of gentleness); it is a difference in manner based on need, not the presence or absence of loving concern and actions ('in sternness, ready to chastise and rebuke' – Morris)

Insight from 2 Corinthians (2 Corinthians 2:1-4; 12:14-21)

The Promise of Perfect Love (Romans 5:5; 1 John 4:18)

Love as Needed (21) – Matthew 4:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:14

Conclusion: The Profit of Untidy Lives and Relationships

The message of the Cross of Christ is what Paul is applying to the believers in Corinth. (1 Corinthians 1:17-18; 2:2) As messy as our relationships might be, we would be far poorer without them! So, suffer gladly in those messy relationships and love! *See Proverbs 14:4 and Messy Oxen!*