

1 Peter 3:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

Analysis

Peter weighs different types of suffering. "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (kreitton gar agathopoiountas, ei thelo to thelēma tou theou, paschein ē kakopoiountas). The conditional "if the will of God be so" (ei thelo to thelēma tou theou) acknowledges God's sovereignty—He permits some believers to suffer, others to be spared. When suffering comes, better to suffer for righteousness than sin. Suffering for good has purpose and reward; suffering for evil brings shame and judgment. This provides perspective: not all suffering is equal morally or eschatologically.

Historical Context

Peter distinguishes between redemptive suffering (for righteousness) and consequential suffering (for sin). This helped believers evaluate persecution—was it for Christ or their own failures? True persecution brings blessing (3:14); deserved punishment brings no credit (2:20). Early church martyrs carefully distinguished: dying for refusing emperor worship brought glory; dying for actual crimes brought no honor. This sobered Christians to maintain moral integrity—making persecution about Christ, not personal failures. Modern application: Christians should ensure suffering stems from gospel faithfulness, not foolishness or sin.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How can you ensure suffering you experience stems from godly living rather than your own sin or foolishness?
2. What does 'if the will of God be so' teach about God's sovereignty over who suffers and who doesn't?

Interlinear Text

κρεῖττον	γὰρ	ἀγαθοποιοῦντας	εἰ	θέλει	τὸ	θέλημα	τοῦ
it is better	For	for well doing	if	be so	G3588	the will	G3588
G2909	G1063	G15	G1487	G2309		G2307	
θεοῦ	πάσχειν	ἢ	κακοποιοῦντας				
of God	that ye suffer	than	for evil doing				
G2316	G3958	G2228	G2554				

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 3:14 (Parallel theme): But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

Matthew 26:39 (Parallel theme): And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

1 Peter 4:19 (References God): Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Acts 21:14 (Parallel theme): And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

1 Peter 2:20 (References God): For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.