

Testing

Scripture Reading — Judges 2:20-23

If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief... — 1 Peter 4:15

Peter writes that Christians will suffer for their faith, but unrighteous behavior or compromising the faith will also produce suffering. If we ignore God's commands, we may well face consequences. And James points out that if we break just a part of the law, we are guilty of breaking all of it (James 2:10).

Israel suffered for their unfaithfulness to the Lord. God allowed this because they did not keep their promises and did not listen to the Lord. So God tested them, Judges says, to see "whether they [would] keep the way of the Lord and walk in it as their ancestors did."

Judges' description of suffering because of disobedience may bring to mind James's image of the law as a mirror (James 1:22-25). Looking into the problem of Israel's suffering here raises an inconvenient question: Are God's people today suffering for their faith or for their faithlessness?

Unending prayer regularly supports brothers and sisters throughout the world who suffer for the faith. But what about fervent prayer for Christians who cannot yet admit they are suffering for unrighteousness, for compromising the faith?

Scripture asks every generation of God's people this question. It may seem unkind, or even unloving, but God means it for our good (see Hebrews 12:10).

May our worship today provoke us to self-examination and to direct our eyes to Jesus for the sake of our spiritual health.

Prayer

Lord, please show us and forgive us our sins—and if we suffer, may it be for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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