

1 PETER 4:1-2

SUFFER THE HOLY LIFE

¹ Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. ² As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

A working definition for an addiction is, any thought or action that one continues to do knowing that it is harmful. Whether our particular addiction is drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, work, anger, gossip, lying, lust, video games, or any one of the catalogue of human activities, it is something that we no longer seem to have the power to stop even in the face of understanding its harm. It has become so much a part of who we think we are that we cannot curtail it without great effort and pain. With the drug addict this is obvious. Withdrawal is a horrible thing to witness, let alone experience. Yet, none of these addictions can be overcome without mental anguish and bodily suffering.

Jesus had no sin, but he identified so closely with us that he took on our sin for us. In order to break the ultimate power of sin over us, he bore it on the cross in his body, and suffered and died. He, through his bodily suffering, made it possible for us to reap the benefit of being done with sin. Jesus has taken away the spiritual and eternal consequences of sin, but it remains for us to repent of our sins.

It is the act of repentance that naturally results in our suffering. To repent is to choose to face the immediate reality of loss and physical craving, or worse. As any recovering addict will tell you, there is no pretty or easy way to break an addiction. Anything other than “cold turkey” is an illusion. But once the “demon” has been dealt with, then the power of human desire has been broken and you are free to follow the will of God. However, there is one caveat; you must die daily to sin and self (Luke 9:23). As members of AA label themselves, in this life we are ever “recovering” sinners.

Lord, I am not what you want me to be. You have opened the path and made the way clear. Through your Spirit transform my heart so that my love for you overcomes my slavery to who I am. Amen.