



### Grain

“Religion must engage us in the exercise of our responsibilities, not teach us to deny the power that is ours.”  
—Rev. Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock

### Field

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. 5: 6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. 8 Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. 10 And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

### Thoughts

“Suffering” and “humility” are layered words in church history. When we are graced to recognize our adversities through the lens of faith we can experience hope. When we are able to let go of our need for perfection to accept our mistakes, our humility helps us to learn and to forgive others and ourselves. But notions of suffering and humility have also been used to silence and wield control over individuals as well as entire groups of people.

The authors, Rev. Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock and Rev. Dr. Rebecca Ann Parker in their book, *Proverbs of Ashes*, share their own histories of being abused and hearing church leaders' messages about suffering, humility, and forgiveness as approval of the abuse. Some oppressors even use Biblical language to purposely manipulate their targets into obedience. But as quoted in the Grain, “Religion must engage us in the exercise of our responsibilities, not teach us to deny the power that is ours.”

How easy it is to accept the claim that we have brought on not only the negative consequences of our mistakes, but all misfortunes we experience. We can quickly believe this even without an oppressive voice chipping away at us in the background. During the pandemic, some are experiencing intensified challenges in unsafe homes, prospects of losing their work or health or both, and patience. How are we exercising our responsibilities in interpreting our struggles?

The adversary says we deserve all the pain we experience. The adversary deems certain lives as unimportant and confuses privilege with human rights. The adversary says we are alone. As we interpret our challenges, know that at the core of sharing in Christ's suffering are immense love and promises of new horizons. Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy Crane