

Suffering as a Christian

I Peter 4:12-19

¹² **Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.** ¹³ **But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.** ¹⁴ **If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.** ¹⁵ **But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.** ¹⁶ **Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.** ¹⁷ **For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?** ¹⁸ **And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"** ¹⁹ **Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.**¹

Introduction

Over the past several weeks we have received instruction from Peter regarding suffering while doing what is right. By now it should be clear to us the Christian life is not a bed of ease. Christians can expect to have trouble in this world, especially as beliefs and behaviors continue to change the company they keep. Family and friends may criticize and ridicule, and the pressure to compromise conviction will be great. Peter's message is clear, "if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name" (4:16).

Here, in the text, Peter returns to the theme of suffering as a Christian from a fresh perspective to help his readers continue to bring glory to God. Prayerfully, Peter's instructions to persecuted Christians will encourage modern-day believers to maintain their hope and continue to do good amid a crumbling and collapsing culture. Let's examine four ways we can responsibly endure suffering.

Exposition

Expect Suffering (4:12)

- A. ***Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.***
 - a. Beloved – αγαπητοί (*agapetoi*) – the object of one's affection
 - i. Same language used to describe Jesus as God's chosen one prophesied in Isaiah 42:1-3
 - 1. **Matthew 12:18, Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.**²
 - b. The language when applied to Christ and his community also reflect exclusivity

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Pe 4:12–19.

² Ibid, Mt 12:18.

- B. Peter reminds them to not be surprised by strange trials as though something strange in happening to them.
- a. Fiery trials – **πύρωσις** (a figurative extension of meaning of ‘to burn’ the experience of painful suffering—‘to suffer pain, to experience severe suffering, painful suffering.’³)
 - b. The picture takes root in the Old Testament
 - i. ***Psalm 66:10, For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried.***⁴
 - ii. ***Malachi 3:1-5, Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. ⁵ “Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts. ⁵***
 - c. Peter introduces his book with the concept of trial by fire
 - i. ***1 Peter 1:7, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.⁶***
 - d. Satan wants us to feel as if God is caught off guard and without a plan for the trouble we face. The fact is He is not surprised, and He has a master plan to use the fire for spiritual development.
 - i. Test – **πειράζω**: to try to learn the nature or character of someone or something by submitting such to thorough and extensive examination.⁷
 1. Same word used in 1 Peter 1:6, “trials”
 - ii. God uses the refining fire to produce Christian character
 1. ***Romans 5:3-5, Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to***

³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 286.

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 66:10.

⁵ Ibid, Mal 3:1–5.

⁶ Ibid, 1 Pe 1:6–7.

⁷ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, 331.

*shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*⁸

2. *James 1:2-3, ²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*⁹

Rejoice in Suffering (I Peter 4:13-14)

- A. *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*¹⁰
 - a. In suffering, we have fellowship with Christ (v. 13a)
 - i. It is an honor to suffer for Christ (**Philippians 1:29**)
*For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,*¹¹
 - ii. Christ promises to be with us amid persecution (**Isa. 41:10**)
*fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*¹²
 - b. In suffering, we look forward to future glory (v. 13b)
 - i. "Suffering" and "glory" are twin truths that are woven into the fabric of Peter's letter. The world believes that the *absence* of suffering means glory, but a Christian's outlook is different. The trial of our faith today is the assurance of glory when Jesus returns¹³
 - ii. God does not remove pain to replace it with glory...instead He transforms our pain into glory.
 1. *John 16:20-22, Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. ²¹When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into*

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 5:3–5.

⁹ Ibid, Jas 1:2–4.

¹⁰ Ibid, 1 Pe 4:13–14.

¹¹ Ibid, Php 1:29.

¹² Ibid, Is 41:10.

¹³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 424–425.

***the world.* ²² So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.¹⁴**

- c. In suffering, we have the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (v. 14)
 - i. The verse can read, “for the presence of the glory, even the Spirit, rest on you”
 - ii. The verse is a reference to Shekinah glory as manifested in the Tabernacle and in the Temple
 - iii. The verse is also a reference to the glory of God Stephen experienced as he was being stoned (Acts 7).
- d. In suffering, we can glorify God. (vv. 14, 16)

Self-Examine during Suffering (I Peter 4:15-18)

- A. **But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.** ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”
- B. There are several questions we should ask ourselves when we face instances of suffering
 - a. Why am I suffering?
 - i. Murderer
 - ii. Thief
 - iii. Evildoer
 - iv. Meddler
 - b. Am I ashamed of Christ?
 - i. **αἰσχύνομαι**: to feel shame or disgrace because of having done something wrong or something beneath one’s dignity or social status¹⁵
 - ii. Jesus gave a lesson to his disciples...**Mark 8:38** ³⁸ ***For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*** ¹⁶
 - c. How do I feel about the lost?
 - i. Peter describes them as those who “do not obey the gospel of God”
 - ii. A fiery trial does not compare to an eternal flaming fire

***II Thessalonians 1:7-10* “and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when**

¹⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 16:20–22.

¹⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 309.

¹⁶ Ibid, Mk 8:38.

he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.¹⁷

- iii. Times of persecution provide an opportunity to witness to those who persecute

Matthew 5:43-48

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.¹⁸

Commit to God (I Peter 4:19)

- A. Therefore, let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.
- a. Entrust – **παρατίθημι (paratithēmi)**: to set before. To entrust something to someone with the intention of preservation.
 - i. ***Psalm 31:5, “Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.”***
 - ii. ***II Timothy 1:12, “which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.”***
 - b. Commitment is not a single action, but it is a consistent attitude
 - c. Before God pours out His wrath on this evil world, a “fiery trial” will come to God’s church, to unite and purify it, that it might be a strong witness to the lost. There is nothing for us to fear if we are suffering in the will of God. Our faithful Father-Creator will victoriously see us through!¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid, 2 Th 1:7–10.

¹⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 5:43–48.

¹⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 427.