

Living in Faith
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1 Peter 4:12-19

Ever been punished for something you didn't deserve to be punished for? Have you ever suffered or seen someone else suffer and it just made no sense? Humanly speaking, what are some first reactions when that happens?

In today's text, Peter tells us the PROPER ways for Christians to respond to suffering. They are responses that are COUNTERINTUITIVE to human nature. That's because the CHRISTIAN LIFE is COUNTERINTUITIVE to human nature.

- Depending on which translation of scripture you have, this section of 1 Peter may have the heading: "Suffering as a Christian" or "Sharing in the Sufferings of Christ."
- About this time you may be saying "GREAT! I came for encouragement and we're going to learn about SUFFERING AS A CHRISTIAN. I wish I'd stayed home and slept in."
- Stick with us, there IS encouragement here for Christians as we face TRIALS in life.

1 Peter 4:12–19 (ESV)

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.

- **Verse 12: What is the first thing out of Peter's mouth in verse 12? Why is it significant?**
- Peter is saying "Because I love you deeply, because God loves you deeply, I'm gonna give it to you straight! This is a message for God's BELOVED people...Christians."
- Peter says, "Don't be surprised when TRIALS come... 'as though something strange were happening to you.'"
- Trials and persecution are not "something strange" to Christians. Expect them!

John Phillips writes:

“The normal condition of the church in a world that hates Christ and that gave Him a cattle shed in which to be born and across on which to die is one of rejection and persecution.”

- By the way, if you’re witnessing to someone, you might not want to LEAD with that.
- *“Hey, you should surrender to Christ and get in on all this rejection and persecution!”*
- I’m not saying deceive them about what it’s like to be a Christian when it comes to persecution and suffering...you just might not want to LEAD with that thought.
- Back to verse 12: Christian’s should not be surprised by ‘fiery trial(s)’.
- **In verse 12, what does Peter say is the PURPOSE of a “fiery trial?”**
- Imagine if you sent your child to school or college and they came home on the first day and said GREAT NEWS, they say we’ll have NO TESTS or EXAMS this year!
- Better yet, what if you went to a doctor or lawyer and found out in their study and licensing they never had to take a TEST? Bet you’d find a new doctor or lawyer!
- Why are we as Christians SURPRISED when we enroll in the school of God’s will and find out there are TESTS?
- That word “fiery” has a DOUBLE significance.
- **Question: What was the HISTORICAL significance of “fiery trial” given what was happening to Christians in the time Peter wrote this letter?**
- Today, it’s unlikely that many of us would face being burned at the stake.
- However, that term “fiery” has a significance for you and me.
- **Question: What do we mean by the term “refining fire?”**

1 Peter 1:6-7

6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so 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.

- **Verse 13: Instead of SURPRISE, How does Peter say should RESPOND to trials**
- Peter, why would we REJOICE in a “fiery trial?” **How does he answer in verse 13?**
- **What do you think it means to “share Christ’s sufferings?”**
- Peter had personal experience in REJOICING in suffering for Christ. (Acts 5:14-42)
- Acts 5:41 41 Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.
- Of course, we’ll never suffer a fraction of what Christ suffered for us. But, when we have to suffer for our Christianity, as William Barclay puts it, we are “walking the way [our] Master walked and sharing the cross [our] Master carried.”
- When we suffer for Christ we enter a most INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP with Christ.

2 Timothy 2:11–12 (ESV)

11 The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him;

Php. 3:10 ...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Romans 8:16-17: 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

- **Question: Why do you think old soldiers who have gone through the hell of war together have such a bond with one another? How about a spouse who has suffered with their spouse or a parent with a child?**

There is no more intimate fellowship with another than to share in suffering together.

- Personal testimony: Sharing in the suffering with my parents. Especially my Dad.

There is no more intimate fellowship with another than when you have gone through suffering together! When we suffer for Christ we have a more intimate fellowship with him in that suffering.

- **Question: Can you think of any other REASONS TO REJOICE when we are TESTED by trials? Are there any BENEFITS to going through a trial trusting God?**
- **Here's one: Who suffers for Christ in the first place?**

Quoting William Barclay again:

“Devotion to a principle can be measured by a person’s willingness to suffer for it; therefore, any kind of persecution is a test of a person’s faith. But it is equally true that it is only the real Christian who will be persecuted. The Christian who compromises with the world will not be persecuted...persecution is the test of the reality of a person’s faith.”

- You’re being persecuted for your faith and you did nothing to deserve it? CONGRATULATIONS you must be doing exactly what God wants you to do.
- If you are in God’s will EXPECT Satan to be on the ATTACK!
- Ever been INSULTED or RIDICULED for being a Christian? CONGRATULATIONS!

Verse 14:

14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

- **Question: How can going through a trial BENEFIT our relationship with God?**
- Trials provide an opportunity to draw upon DIVINE POWER

Listen to what Chuck Swindoll says about verse 14:

“From a purely human perspective, we often think [going through a trial] is the worst possible situation to be in. But from a divine perspective, this is the precise condition necessary to draw believers closer to God. We are never more dependent on the Holy Spirit’s strength than when we’ve come to the absolute end of ourselves. As long as we operate under the illusion that we can handle things ourselves, we will wallow in spiritual weakness. But when we finally admit that apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5), we can begin to draw upon divine power.”

If we’ll respond as Peter prescribes, nothing pushes us closer to our Lord than a trial!

- Verse 15 reminds us that not all suffering is UNDESERVED. He uses four examples going from the extreme to the mundane: Murder; theft; doing evil; and meddling.
- Sometimes we get ourselves in trouble and the suffering we experience was “self-inflicted” --- Peter says, that’s NOT suffering for Christ, that’s suffering for STUPIDITY and WRONGDOING.
- Verse 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.
- Did you know that the term Christian is only mentioned three times in the New Testament (1 Peter 4:16; Acts 11:26; 26:28)? *The name was originally given by the enemies of the church as a term of reproach; but in time, it became an honored name.* (Bible Exposition Commentary)
- **Is Christian an ‘honored name’ in society today?**
- **Do people normally suffer persecution if they claim to be “religious?”** What about claiming to be a Christian?
- Peter is saying, we shouldn’t be ashamed if we suffer as a Christian, we are BLESSED to wear that name!
- Verse 17 is one our Pastor has quoted a lot over the past year or so,

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?

- We serve a righteous and a just God and if His people are not obedient He has to (to put it in Georgia terms) “take us to the woodshed.” Sometimes the suffering we see in the church is the result of our own disobedience.
- In verse 18 Peter quotes the essence of Proverbs 11:31. The Message paraphrases it like this:
- It’s judgment time for God’s own family. We’re first in line. If it starts with us, think what it’s going to be like for those who refuse God’s Message!
- Finally, in verse 19 Peter reminds us that no matter how bad our “fiery trials” are, God is still the same God who created us.

19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

- We can ENTRUST our souls to a FAITHFUL Creator.

- That word “entrust” is the same word Jesus used on the cross when he said, *“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!”* (Luke 23:46 (ESV)). The word has a FINANCIAL meaning. In those days there were no banks, so if you went on a journey you left your fortune with a TRUSTED friend.
- If Jesus on the cross ENTRUSTED His soul to His heavenly Father, how much more can you and I TRUST Him when we’re in a trial?

- How can we REJOICE in trials?

Steven Curtis Chapman...a man who’s known some unbelievable trial and tragedy in the past few years...wrote these lyrics many years before:

What kind of joy is this
 That counts it a blessing to suffer
 What kind of joy is this
 That gives the prisoner his song
 What kind of joy could stare death in the face
 And see it as sweet victory
 This is the joy of a soul that's forgiven and free

Going through a trial?

- Don’t be SURPRISED, REJOICE!
- You’re sharing in Christ’s sufferings!
- If they persecuted Him they will persecute us!
- Lean into His Spirit living inside you!
- Don’t be ashamed to suffer as a Christian because we serve a Creator we can TRUST Verse 19 to keep his promise in James 1:12 (ESV)

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

That’s THE TAKEAWAY!