

Ridiculed
October 23, 2016
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1 Peter 4:12–19 (NLT)

If you go to Amazon and search for “survival guide” in books you’ll find over 23,000 results. There are survival guides for every part of life you can think of.

They range from the serious, “*100 Deadly Skills: Survival Edition: The SEAL Operative’s Guide to Surviving in the Wild and Being Prepared for Any Disaster*,” to the not so serious, “*The Zombie Survival Guide: Complete Protection from the Living Dead*.” Mel Brooks’ son Max wrote that one, so obviously satire is inherited. If you’re concerned about surviving the elements if you’re lost in the wilderness, or preparing for the apocalypse there are 336 books on survival skills and 1,374 books on survival & emergency preparedness.

Here’s my question: **With so much material on how to survive under difficult conditions, do you think the average American would be prepared to survive in extreme conditions? Why?**

The average person doesn’t prepare for extremely difficult circumstances because we don’t really expect them to happen to -- US! When a catastrophe in life happens, most of us are surprised by it and not very well prepared for it. The Apostle Peter said that followers of Christ should not be surprised by trials.

Peter was just reinforcing what Jesus said. Jesus warned us that: “In this world you will have trouble.” (John 16:33)¹ Speaking specifically to His followers, Jesus said: ¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you (insults) and persecute you (oppress, harass) and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12) ² That was right before He told us to go be “salt and light” in this crazy world.

Big Idea: Committed Christians who live out our faith are targets for trials. Today’s text is what I would call a “*Survival Guide for Suffering Saints*.” Peter reminds us that nothing can touch you unless our

loving Heavenly Father allows it. He encourages us that the grace of God will allow us to not only “survive” but to thrive in the face of “fiery trials.”

Let’s begin by reading this text, and then let’s unpack what it says, what it means, and how it should change us this week.

Suffering for Being a Christian

¹² Dear friends, don’t be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. ¹³ Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.

¹⁴ If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God* rests upon you.* ¹⁵ If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people’s affairs. ¹⁶ But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name! ¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God’s household. And if judgment begins with us, what terrible fate awaits those who have never obeyed God’s Good News? ¹⁸ And also, “If the righteous are barely saved, what will happen to godless sinners?”*

¹⁹ So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you.

- Verse twelve reinforces what Jesus already told us. Saints will suffer for being saints so don’t be surprised!
- Verse thirteen: We should rejoice when Satan targets us because suffering for Jesus means we are sharing in His suffering. **What does it mean to share in the suffering of Jesus?**
- The Bible Knowledge Commentary says, “*Anything that we suffer for the sake of Christ is a privilege, not a penalty.*”³ Wiersbe: “*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 returns (1 Peter 1:7–8). This was the experience of our Lord (1 Peter 5:1), and it shall also be our experience.*”⁴

- Peter spoke from experience. Remember Acts chapter five? The Apostles were jailed for preaching Christ and an angel sprung them from jail. The Jewish Sanhedrin wanted to kill them but God intervened. They got off with a beating. Most of us would say, *“Got off with a BEATING! That’s not a happy ending to that story!”* Peter and the apostles thought so:
- Acts 5:40: ...and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.⁵
- Survival Tip #1 for Suffering Saints: When your faith as a Christian makes you a target for persecution, don’t feel “whipped,” feel WORTHY! We can’t expect to share in Jesus’ glory unless we also share in His suffering.
- Verse fourteen tells us when we’re insulted as a Christian, the power of the Holy Spirit of God goes to work in us to transform our trial to a triumph.
- Example: Think of the power of the Holy Spirit like an automatic fire sprinkler system in a building. Do you know how a “glass bulb” sprinkler system works?
- “Because the water is always in the piping, fire sprinklers are always "on call". If fire breaks out, the air temperature above the fire rises and the sprinkler activates when the air temperature gets high enough. The sprinkler sprays water forcefully over the flames, extinguishing them completely in most cases, or at least controlling the heat and limiting the development of toxic smoke until the fire department arrives. Only the sprinkler nearest the fire activates. Smoke will not activate sprinklers.”⁶
- Look at the parallels: The Holy Spirit is always “on call.” When things get hot enough the Spirit’s power goes to work to control the fire. He may or may not extinguish it fully but He will get you to safety. Only the sprinkler nearest the fire activates. The Spirit’s power acts specifically on YOUR situation, and is available to every believer individually.
- Holy Spirit power in the midst of persecution is why we read about martyrs who were able to sing praises while being burned alive.(Google: Polycarp)

- Survival Tip #2 for Suffering Saints: Trials give us MORE of the Holy Spirit's power. If you can still rejoice in the midst of a trial, that's evidence that the Spirit of God is active and working in you!
- Verse fifteen is for those who confuse "persecution" with "prosecution."
- It speaks to those who cry "persecution" when they're really just being punished for doing wrong. Christians were not to retaliate (3:9). Physical violence was not to be met by murder. Confiscation of property was not to be compensated for by theft. No matter what their trials, Christians were to do nothing that would justify punishing them as criminals (cf. 2:19; 3:17).⁷
- Verse sixteen: In Peter's day the term "Christian" was meant as an insult. Then for a long time "Christian" became respectable. Unfortunately in our day that label is once again being used as an insult not a compliment.
- Survival Tip #3 for Suffering Saints is to embrace our identity as followers of Christ. Peter tells us NOT to be ashamed but to feel honored to be called Christian. God forbid that the insults of pagans would cause us to deny the name of the one who died to save us!
- Verse seventeen: Peter says judgment is coming to everyone and it has to start in the "household of God." We hate to admit it, but sometimes God has to allow trials into our lives to "purify" us like gold.
- Back in the first chapter of this book Peter wrote:
⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 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.⁸

Proverbs 3:12 (NLT) tells us,

¹²For the Lord corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.*

- When we become a follower of Christ, He enrolls us in "school" to make us more like Him. We call that "sanctification."
- If we sent our kids to school and were told there would be no tests, we'd likely be screaming and yelling about it. *"How can*

*you be sure they're learning anything if you never test them!
These kids won't learn anything unless they get pushed out of
their comfort zone and tested!"*

- Ironic that we see tests in school as necessary and tests as Christians as punishment. We say, "If God really loved me He wouldn't make me go through this!"
- God allows us to experience trials BECAUSE He's a loving Father. Otherwise he would be a deadbeat dad and we'd be neglected kids with no Spiritual stamina.
- Survival Tip #3 for Suffering Saints: Remember that trials are really tests that make us stronger in our faith.
- Verses seventeen and eighteen remind us that those who don't know Christ face judgment that will be eternally worse than ours.
- Our natural reaction to being persecuted by pagans is to lash out!

Romans 12:14 (NLT)

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them.

1 Corinthians 4:12b (NLT)

¹² ...We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us.

- Jesus said, "love your enemies" and "bless those who persecute you." How we handle being targeted for our faith in Christ should be a witness to those who abuse us to win them to Christ.
- Verse 19 is our most important "Survival Tip for Suffering Saints." No matter the trial, you can trust your life to the God of the universe.
- The word "entrust" is a picture of placing something valuable on deposit. The word literally means to "place beside." Picture God saying, "Put your life right here next to me and I will guard and protect you." What an idea, when we're in the midst of trials we can "snuggle up beside" our Heavenly Father and He will keep us safe from harm. He's strong enough to do it!
- If your Heavenly Father is powerful enough to create and sustain the universe, He'll surely take care of YOU!

So, What's The Takeaway?

- Saints will suffer for being saints so don't be surprised!
- As followers of Christ we not only share in His glory but in His suffering.
- Let me clarify something. When we read the context of Peter's letter we immediately think of religious persecution and that's exactly what those believers were facing.
- It would be easy to walk away from this text saying, "*When I experience religious persecution I'll be ready!*"
- Satan will target a follower of Christ in any weak spot (any Achilles heel) he can find to derail us from serving Jesus.
- It may be a health crisis, a problem with our marriage, problems with our kids, financial or work setbacks. You don't have to experience religious persecution in order to be tested as a suffering saint. How do we survive?
- Survival Tip #1 for Suffering Saints: When your faith as a Christian makes you a target for persecution, don't feel "whipped," feel WORTHY!
- Survival Tip #2 for Suffering Saints: Trials give us MORE of the Holy Spirit's power. If you're in the midst of a trial and are able to rejoice, that's evidence that the Spirit of God is active and working in you!
- Survival Tip #3 for Suffering Saints is to embrace our identity as followers of Christ. God forbid that the insults of pagans would cause us to deny the name of the one who died to save us!
- Survival Tip #4 for Suffering Saints: Remember that trials are really tests that make us stronger in our faith.
- Survival Tip #5 for Suffering Saints: You can trust your life to the God of the universe. If your Heavenly Father is powerful enough to create and sustain the universe, He'll surely take care of YOU!
- Now you're equipped. When the trials come you can survive them because as

2 Thessalonians 3:3 (NLT) tells us

³ ...the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.*

¹ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Jn 16:33). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Mt 5:11–12). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

³ Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 854). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 425). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Ac 5:40–41). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁶ <http://www.firesprinklerinitiative.org/advocacy-tools/fact-sheets/how-sprinklers-work.aspx>

⁷ Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 854). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (1 Pe 1:6–7). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.