

## 1 Peter 4:12-19 “Suffering as a Christian”

<sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup> If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. <sup>15</sup> But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. <sup>16</sup> Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. <sup>17</sup> 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? <sup>18</sup> And

“If the righteous is scarcely saved,  
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

<sup>19</sup> Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

- This morning as we continue in our study of 1 Peter, we read of the Apostles words to the exiled Christians throughout the Mediterranean world in the first century and his directness regarding their suffering cannot be ignored. This is actually a very simple and straightforward passage, and I believe that the explanation and study of it should be equally as simple.
  - Peter begins by stating, “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.”
  - I think Peter’s words here are clear and direct. The basic assumption is that Christians will face suffering. And when they do, they should not be surprised, as it is a test of their faith ordained by God Himself.
  - He then goes on to explain further why they are suffering and the perspective they should have as they suffer.
  - As we look at this passage, we need to see a few points here:

- I. The Promise of Suffering**
- II. The Blessing in the Suffering**
- III. The Purpose of Suffering**

<b>I. The Promise of Suffering</b>
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<sup>12</sup> *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.*

- In recent months, news outlets throughout this country and the world have been consumed with covering the apparent growth of a terrorist group in the Middle East that, up until just about a year ago was little known. This group, known as ISIS, has taken to

the internet to graphically display many barbaric acts in an attempt to gain attention and cause fear for those who would dare to challenge them.

- I think there is very little doubt in the field of philosophy that the most convincing argument against the existence of God is the problem of evil and suffering.
- The ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus is credited with first formally wrestling and developing an argument regarding the existence and problem of evil in the world. Later in the eighteenth century, Scottish philosopher David Hume, in his work *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, would build upon Epicurus's thoughts and argue against the existence of God primarily because of the existence of evil. Hume's argument went as follows: "Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able to do so? Then he is impotent. Is he able to prevent evil, but not willing to do so? Then he is malevolent and evil himself. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing to prevent evil? Then why would we call him God?"
- It appears that most Christians today, when challenged with the question, "Why is there evil in the world?" will simply respond, "Because of man's free will." That is, they assert that the preservation of man's free will is so important in the eyes of God, that He allows us to make choices that often have dreadful consequences. This is true whether someone is a Christian or not. This is the view that I was actually taught in Seminary, and it is the view I believe to which most Christians hold.
- However, I believe there is a much more biblical argument. That is that we begin not with man's free will, but God's sovereignty. That is, that God is sovereign over His Creation, and because of the fall of Creation through Adam's sin, we are sinful people, living in a fallen, sinful world. God has chosen to redeem us through Adam, and the sufferings we experience are both the result of our sin and the means God has chosen through which to purify and redeem us. In other words, we do not suffer simply because we have free will and God desires to preserve our right to choose; rather, we suffer because God has actually ordained our sufferings in a manner that sanctifies us and glorifies Him.
- In fact, throughout Scripture, God has made it clear that in order to redeem us, He sent His only Son to suffer on our behalf. Christ was the only righteous person to ever live, yet He suffered in a way that we could never comprehend. Furthermore, this was the will of God, before the foundation of the world. Consequently, according to God's Word, when we suffer for Christ, this is not the result of the consequences of free will; rather, it is an ordained blessing of God that He purposed for our good.

## **II. The Blessing of Suffering**

<sup>13</sup> But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup> If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. <sup>15</sup> But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. <sup>16</sup> Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. <sup>17</sup> 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? <sup>18</sup> And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" <sup>19</sup> Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

- To begin with in this section, we must first reiterate Peter's point that there **is no blessing if we suffer as murderers, thieves or evildoers. If we suffer and are even killed for these acts, we receive the just penalty for our sin.**
  - Peter adds another "sin" though to this list that may seem odd to some. He also states that none of us should suffer as a "meddler" as well. According to John MacArthur, the word "meddler" literally means, "one who meddles in things alien to his calling"... "an agitator, " or "troublemaker."
  - This underscores Peter's earlier call to submit to authorities and honor the Emperor. Therefore, he is likely saying that we should not suffer as one who has sought to disrupt the social systems of the day through disobedience as a rebel or dissenter.
  - The "righteous" suffering that Peter is clearly indicating here is the suffering that is a direct result of our identification with Christ – not our political or social aspirations.

"The Christian who stands fast and suffers for the gospel is responding to an eternal reality that will outlast death and even history itself. The joy prompted by recognizing this is but a foretaste of the joy that Christians will experience when the glory of Christ is fully and universally revealed (4: 13) and their faith is vindicated at last."

Jobes, Karen H. (2005-04-01). 1 Peter (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament) (Kindle Locations 6759-6761). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

### III. The Purpose in the Suffering

*<sup>17</sup> 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? <sup>18</sup> 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.***

- About a month after I graduated from high school, I entered into about seven weeks of Cadet Basic Training in Upstate New York. During this period of inculturation, I learned what it was like to be a soldier in the United States Army. I learned protocol, got up early for PT, got my head shaved, and learned how to care for an M-16 rifle. Of course I learned a lot more as well, going through countless drills that, at the time, I did not fully appreciate the importance of.
- One of these drills was one of the more memorable times of that summer. The reason was not because it was dramatic or all that difficult, but just because it was unique.
- In this drill, my squad of about 10 cadets all put on our government issued gas masks and entered into a small building that was filled with tear gas. As we walked in, we could breathe just fine and once we were all in the building with the door closed behind us, the non-commissioned officer in the room began to lead us in some basic calisthenics, such as jumping jacks, in order to get our blood pumping and our breathing up a bit. Then, one by one he had us take off our masks (as he left his on) and began asking us questions. Of course we were breathing hard at this point, and were forced to breath in the tear gas – which was the point. Immediately, one by one, we would start gagging and coughing and he would open the door and push us outside. Once out, we would cough and gag for a bit, just glad we could breathe on our own again.
  - So, why would every new soldier in Basic Training be required to undergo such a strange activity?
  - Well, the answer is simple: so that we would learn to trust our mask. If we never new how well the mask worked, or how miserable it was without it, then we would never appreciate how important it would be (in the event of a chemical attack) to our personal survival.
  - In other words, the brief discomfort and irritation in the gas room caused us to keep the mask close by and depend upon it if we ever really needed it.
- Now this may not be the best of analogies, but it works for me. That is, the trials in this life demonstrate that no other person, institution, or philosophical idea will be able to sustain or save us, other than Christ Himself. All other foundations are sinking sand except of the rock which is Christ.

**This is why the blessing of suffering is the same as the purpose of it – faith, trust, and hope in Christ alone!**

- Peter makes an interesting point here, as well, stating that  
***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?”***
- He also quotes from Proverbs 11:31, (out of the Septuagint):

*“If the righteous is scarcely saved,  
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”*

- The point here is that we are judged with the same judgment that the pagans are, yet we are “covered” by Christ. We are not consumed by the fire as they are. **We are saved through judgment.**
- Karen Jobes, “God will begin his process of judging humanity with his own people, to see which are truly Christ’s. (Compare a similar teaching about God’s judgment in Jesus’ parable where he first judges the sheep and then the goats in Matt. 25: 31– 46.) This understanding of to “judgment” is corroborated when the suffering of pagan hostility that is identified as God’s judgment in 4: 17 is previously described in 4: 12 as a fiery ordeal that is happening “to test you.””

Psalm 61: Hear my cry, O God,  
listen to my prayer;  
<sup>2</sup>from the end of the earth I call to you  
when my heart is faint.  
Lead me to the rock  
that is higher than I,  
<sup>3</sup>for you have been my refuge,  
a strong tower against the enemy.

Gas Mask  
God is our refuge and strength. Strong Tower, run into it.  
Polycarp  
Cuba

Parents  
Spouses  
Government  
Friends  
Technology  
Medicine

The Source is the hope.

Pentecost – the Spirit rests.

This is probably a reference to Isaiah 11:2 and Acts 2.

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- I. The Promise of Trials
- II. The Hope in Trials
- III. The Purpose of Trials