

LIVING HOPE IN A FALLEN WORLD
1 Peter

The Right Way to Suffer

(1 Peter 4:12-19 -- Dec. 2012)

Purpose: It is normal, not **strange**, for believers to have trials of faith. As God's Spirit rests upon us we learn to rejoice in the midst of the things we suffer on His behalf, while at the same time continuing to do good.

Once again Peter calls them his "**dear friends**" (1 Pet. 4:12 & 2:11) and complements the truth that believers are the "**family of God**" (1 Pet. 4:17).

This is the only time in the N.T. that God is referred to as the "**Faithful Creator**" (1 Pet. 4:19). This harkens back to God's work at the beginning of creation, a work filled with His goodness ("**... and it was very good**", Gen. 1:31). So Peter calls believers to "**continue to do good**" (1 Pet. 4:19), remembering that God is the source of and reason for all goodness (Mat. 19:17 ; Luke 18:19)

A. Suffering fiery trials is not "**something strange**" in the Christian life

(1 Pet. 4:12)

Fiery trials are not strange because of the Jesus' example that we follow:

"It the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you." (John 15:18-19)

Fiery trials are not strange because they are the natural result of a godly life:

*You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. **In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted** while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."* (2 Tim. 3:10-13)

And so, Peter reminds us that we should "**not be surprised**" when painful trials come upon us.

Indeed "**... the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.**"
(Heb. 12:6)

B. Secondly, Christians rejoice as they participate in the sufferings of Christ

(1 Pet. 4:13-14)

Peter has already shown how faith is proved genuine by suffering trials, and affirmed that suffering on behalf of Christ is a joyful privilege, "**In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.**" (1 Pet. 1:6). For it is in this manner that believers will be "**filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy**" (1 Pet. 1:8).

The reason? – Because we are receiving the goal of our faith, the salvation of our soul. (1 Pet. 1:9).

This is both a present reality: "**Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**" (Mat. 5:11-12)

And, it will become a future reality: ***The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*** (Rom. 8:16-17)

To make his point absolutely certain, Paul finishes off saying, ***"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."*** (Rom. 8:18)

C. Thirdly, we are reminded to carefully examine the cause of our trials

(1 Pet. 4:15-19)

Peter has made a clear distinction between righteous & unrighteous suffering (1 Pet. 2:17-21) He has already clarified that, ***"... it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God"*** (1 Pet. 2:19) and that ***"... if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God"***. (1 Pet. 2:20)

Peter has affirmed that Christians have been called to suffer ***"... because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps"***. (1 Pet. 2:17)

And he has reminded us that, ***"it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."*** (1 Pet. 3:17)

- For God's blessing comes not only in the avoidance of suffering, but also in the midst of it.

So Peter wisely delineates right from wrong reasons to suffer

1. The wrong kind is suffering ***"as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler"*** (1 Pet. 4:15)
2. And, the right kind is suffering ***"because of the name of Christ"*** (1 Pet. 4:14), ***"as a Christian"*** (1 Pet. 4:16), ***"according to God's will"*** (1 Pet. 4:19).

Therefore, when we participate in the sufferings of Christ we have no need to be ashamed.

- We are to ***"praise God that we bear that name"*** (1 Pet. 4:16), the name of Jesus Christ.
- We are to commit ourselves to God when suffering according to His will (1 Pet. 4:19), and not ceasing to do good as we were created to do (Eph. 2:10).

Peter reminds us that God's judgment begins with us, ***"the family of God"*** (Pet. 4:17), and marks out for us a distinction between those who ***"do not obey the gospel"*** and will receive their fair share of God's righteous judgment; and those righteous ones who do obey it, who will be spared that judgment because they have believed upon the Christ who saves them, and give evidence of this by lives lived in true repentance.

Such teaching prepares Christians to endure hardship, to share in Christ's suffering, and to look forward to a better and more lasting inheritance (Heb. 10:32-39).

"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promise to those who love him." (James 1:12)

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (Cor. 2 4:16-18)