

Divine Perspective @Suffering

by **David Lee Burris**

For God called you to do *good*,
even if it means suffering, just as
Christ suffered for you.
He is your example,
and you must follow
in his **STEPS.**

- 1 Peter 2:21 (NLT)



The **BENEFITS** of
SUFFERING &
how to **THINK**
about **PAIN**



bibleThinker

Suffering For Christ

- How do we respond?
 - Look to eternity 1 Peter 1:3-5, 8-9;
Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:17
 - Remember who we are 1 Peter 1:17-19, 2:4-10
 - Keep our behavior honorable 1 Peter 2:11-20
 - Repay evil with good 1 Peter 2:21-25, 3:8-9
 - Be prepared to give an answer 1 Peter 3:13-15
 - Love one another 1 Peter 4:8-11
 - Submit to elders 1 Peter 5:1-5
 - Cast our anxieties upon God 1 Peter 5:6-7,
Heb 4:14-16

SUFFERING IN DIVINE PERSPECTIVE

Human Suffering

Divine Perspective

Various trials (1 Pet. 1:6).

Rejoice; they are temporary (1 Pet. 1:6).

Unjust authority (1 Pet. 2:18).

Silence evil men by doing good. Follow the example of Christ (1 Pet. 2:21).

Suffering for doing what is right (1 Pet. 3:14).

Be ready to give testimony of your faith (1 Pet. 3:15).

Suffering because of a determination to resist carnal desires (1 Pet. 4:1).

Give up carnal pursuits (1 Pet. 4:2).

Religious persecution (1 Pet. 4:12–14).

Be partakers in Christ's sufferings (1 Pet. 4:13, 14).

Suffering as part of God's refining fire for spiritual growth (1 Pet. 4:19).

Commit your life to Him; He is faithful (1 Pet. 4:19).

Suffering from the attack of Satan (1 Pet. 5:8).

Resist Satan; be steadfast in faith (1 Pet. 5:9).¹

¹ Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). [*Nelson's complete book of Bible maps & charts: Old and New Testaments*](#) (Rev. and updated ed.). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in
the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves

LIKE LIVING STONES

are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood,
to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 PETER 2:4-5

BUT YOU ARE
a *chosen* PEOPLE,
a *royal* PRIESTHOOD,
a *holy* NATION,
God's *special* POSSESSION,

THAT YOU MAY
DECLARE the *praises*
of Him who called you
out of darkness into
His *wonderful light*.

1 Peter 2:9

Peter Knew Persecution From Personal Experience

Apostle Peter detailed that genuine faithfulness from the inside-out is fundamental to Christian apologetics because followers of Christ often are called upon to give a defense in trying times.

Peter knew a thing or two about suffering. Very soon after the establishment of the Church in Acts Two, Peter and John were repeatedly arrested, imprisoned, interrogated, threatened, and beaten (Acts 4-5). Peter was in Jerusalem during a time when “a great persecution arose against the church...at Jerusalem,” as Saul “made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison” (Acts 8:1,3). Later, when “Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church,” including killing the apostle James, the king then arrested and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12:1-4), very likely with the intention of killing him, too (were it not for Peter’s divine deliverance from prison— Acts 12:5-19).

– *Apologetics Press*

Is it not encouraging that God used the very imperfect (but penitent) Peter to write these words? Recall that Peter cowered on the Sea of Galilee, fearfully denied Jesus three times, and even had a hypocritical moment later in life when he, for the fear of Jewish Christians, played favoritism and shunned his Gentile brethren (Galatians 2:11-14).

It is this apostle (likely toward the end of his life) whom the Holy Spirit used in order to exhort struggling, flawed followers of Christ to courageously stand their ground, to “not be afraid,” and to “always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that’s in you.” Indeed, regardless of “whenever, wherever, and by whomever it is challenged,” we must speak up and explain the “reason for the hope” that is in us.

– *Apologetics Press*

Endurance

"Those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right" (1 Peter 4:19).

"Just a little longer."

Excellence

"After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ," (1 Peter 5:10).

"Soon, all will be wonderful."

Powerful

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time," (1 Peter 5:6).

"I'm still in control."

Endurance

"Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose..." (1 Peter 4:1).

"Follow Me."

Suffering's pathway to glory in 1 Peter!

Friends,

when life gets *really difficult,*

don't jump to the conclusion that

God isn't on the job.

Instead,

be glad that you are in the very thick of what Christ experienced.

This is a **SPIRITUAL REFINING PROCESS,**

with *glory* just around the corner.

1 Peter 4:12-13 [MSG]

NCV

¹²My friends, do not be surprised at the terrible trouble which now comes to test you. Do not think that something strange is happening to you. ¹³But be happy that you are sharing in Christ's sufferings so that you will be happy and full of joy when Christ comes again in glory. ¹⁴When people insult you because you follow Christ, you're blessed, because the glorious Spirit, the Spirit of God, is with you. ¹⁵Do not suffer for murder, theft, or any other crime, nor because you trouble other people. ¹⁶But if you suffer because you are a Christian, don't be ashamed. Praise God because you wear that name. ¹⁷It is time for judgment to begin with God's family. And if that judging begins with us, what will happen to those people who do not obey the Good News of God?

¹⁸"If it is very hard for a good person to be saved,
the wicked person and the sinner
will surely be lost!"

¹⁹So those who suffer as God wants should trust their souls to the faithful Creator as they continue to do what is right.

NKJV

¹²Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. On their part He's blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

¹⁷For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸Now

"If the righteous one is scarcely saved,

Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

¹⁹Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls *to Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.²

² Lucado, M. (1997). [*Life lessons from the inspired word of God: Books of 1 & 2 Peter*](#) (pp. 66–68). Dallas, TX: Word Pub.

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial,.... By which may be meant the afflictions and persecutions which daily come upon them, for the sake of Christ and his Gospel; signified by "fire" or "burning", because grievous to the flesh, and gave uneasiness, distress, and pain to it; and because of the fury of men, and the violence and fierceness of their rage, expressed thereby; as also because the people of God under them are sometimes ready to conceive that the wrath of God is poured out, like fire, upon them. But the apostle would not have these saints entertain any such thoughts, and therefore he calls them "beloved"; that is, of God, as they were notwithstanding all the fiery trials and afflictions which were brought upon them; or he means, that they were beloved by him, and dear unto him, and other saints, though ill-treated and reproached by the world: the Syriac and Arabic versions read, "my beloved"; and the Ethiopic version, "our brethren"; and the apostle exhorts them not to look upon their afflictions that either did or should attend them as strange uncommon things; since afflictions, of whatsoever kind, are not things of chance, and do not rise up out of the dust, but are by the appointment, and according to the will of God; and are also the common lot of the people of God in all ages, from beginning of the world, the same afflictions are accomplished in others; yea, Christ himself endured the same hatred, reproach, and contradiction of sinners, against himself; and they are what he has given his people reason to expect, having told them of them before hand, that they might not be offended at them; and as they lay in his way to glory, it need not seem strange that the saints also should, through many tribulations, enter the kingdom. Moreover, this fiery dispensation, be it what it will, was not to destroy them, but to try them, and that for their good, profit, and advantage; just as gold and silver are tried in the fire, and lose their dross, and become purer and brighter: which is to try you; afflictions try the graces of the saints; as their faith in Christ, which becomes thereby much more precious than of gold that perisheth; and their love to him, by which it appears that no tribulation can separate them from it, nor floods of afflictions can drown it; and their hope of eternal life, which grows more strong, and is as an anchor, sure and steadfast, amidst the greatest storms.



I PETER

SANCTIFIED SUFFERING

But the God of all grace,
who hath called us unto his eternal glory
by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while,
make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

1 Peter 5:10

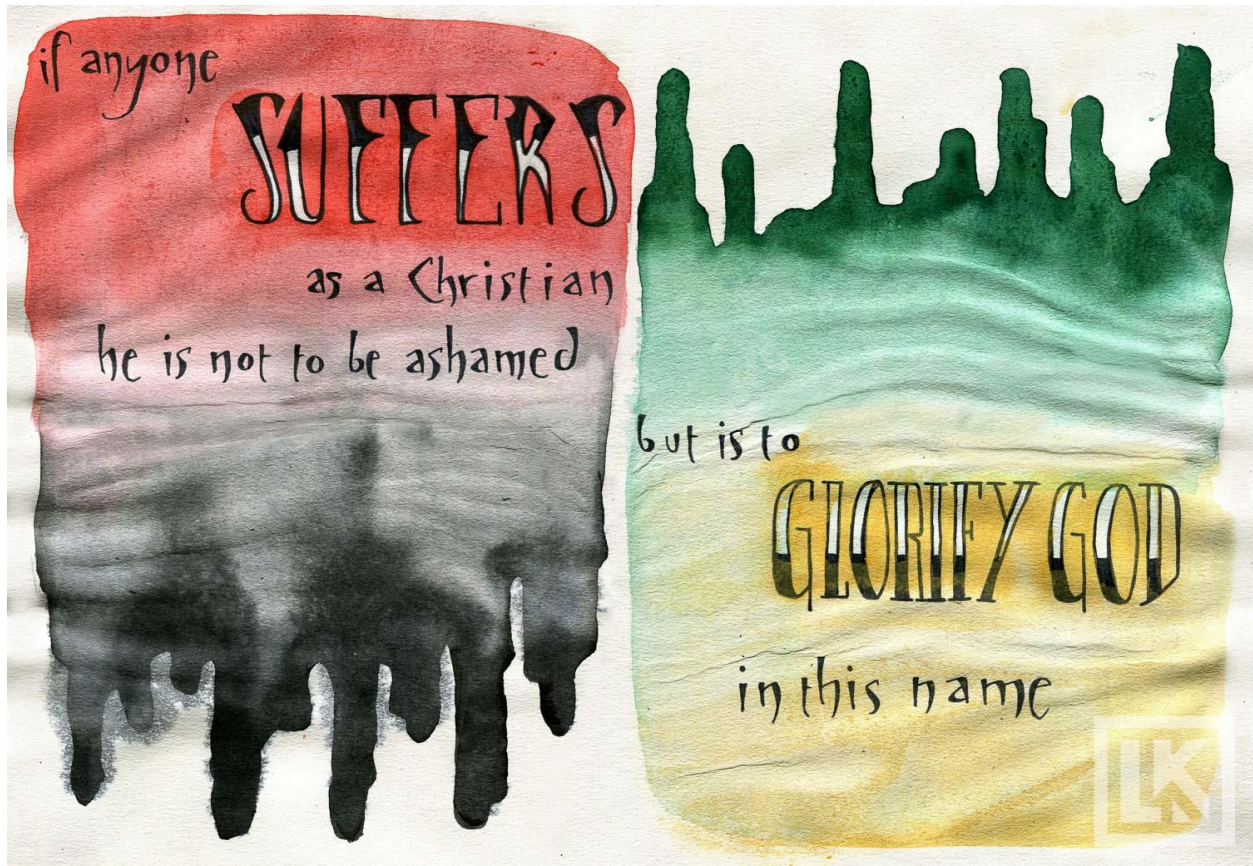


Pulpit Commentary @ First Peter 5:10

Verse 10. - But the God of all grace (comp. [2 Corinthians 1:3](#), "the God of all comfort"). St. Peter has finished his exhortations; he has told his readers what they must do; he now bids them look to God, and tells them where they will find strength. God will work within them both to will and to do of his good pleasure; for he is the God of all grace. All that grace by which we are saved, without which we can do nothing, comes from him as its Author and Source. **Who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus**; rather, **who called you... in Christ Jesus**. All the best manuscripts read "you" instead of us. Two of the most ancient omit "Jesus" here. God called us "in Christ;" that is, through spiritual union with Christ; the glory is promised to these who are one with Christ; for the glory is Christ's, and his members will share it. The very end and purpose of our calling was that we might inherit that glory. This is the apostle's great topic of consolation. **After that ye have suffered a while**; literally, **a little**. The word may refer to the degree, as well as to the duration, of the sufferings. They are transient; the glory is eternal. They may seem very severe, but they are light in comparison with that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." **Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you**. The manuscripts vary between the future and the optative in these four verbs; the preponderance of evidence seems in favor of the future. The emphatic pronoun **αὐτός** must not be omitted. Translate therefore, "shall himself make you perfect." He only can "perfect what is lacking in our faith" ([1 Thessalonians 3:10](#), where the same verb is used); and he will do it. This is our hope and encouragement. The verb **καταρτίζω** means "to finish, to complete, to repair." It is the word used in the account of the calling of Peter and Andrew, James and John, by the Sea of Galilee, when the two last were in the ship with Zebedee their father, mending **καταρτίζοντας** their nets. God will repair, bring to completion, what is lacking in the character of his chosen, if they persevere in prayer, if they are sober and vigilant (comp. [1 Corinthians 1:10](#); [2 Corinthians 13:11](#), etc.). **Stablish** **στηρίξει**. The Lord had said to St. Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen **στήριξον** thy brethren" ([Luke 22:32](#)); Peter remembers his Master's words. **Strengthen** **σθενώσει**. The word occurs only here. **Settle** **θεμελιώσει**; literally, "shall ground you, shall give you a firm foundation." "Digna **Petro** oratio, 'Confirmat fratres suos,'" says Bengel (comp. [Ephesians 3:17](#); [2 Timothy 2:19](#); [1 Corinthians 3:11](#)). The word is omitted in the Vatican and Alexandrine Manuscripts; but it is found in the Sinaitic and other manuscripts and versions, and ought to be retained. 1 Peter 5:10

Suffering aids us in seeing the real worth of things. When one passes through the experience of intense suffering, and perhaps comes to the threshold of death, the entire world can take on new meaning. The singing of the birds is more vivid than it ever has been. A fresh spring day makes the soul ecstatic. Family and friends take on new preciousness. Christopher Reeve, who once starred as “Superman” in the movies, was involved in a life-threatening accident, and discovered that in real life he was not as invincible as the character he portrayed. In recent interviews, Mr. Reeve commented that since being paralyzed, he has discovered a new zest for life. Indeed, suffering can provide a sharper vision of life’s priorities.

Suffering separates the superficial from the stable. Paul cautioned the Corinthian saints against building up the church superficially. Some folks are of the “wood, hay, [and] stubble” variety, while others exhibit those qualities of “gold, silver [and] costly stones” (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Saints of the latter category endure; those of the former do not. Why so? It simply is because the two groups are tested by “fire” (hardships), and that testing fire separates the quality converts from those who really aren’t serious about their Christian commitment. Jesus once spoke of those who receive the gospel impulsively, and, for a while endure. Eventually, persecution and trial arise, and rather quickly the superficial fade away (see Matthew 13:20-21). - Truth



Suffering Makes Us Homesick

Suffering sharpens our awareness that this **earth is not a permanent home**.

Peter sought to encourage early Christians who were being persecuted not to despair. He reminded them that they were but “sojourners and pilgrims” upon this earth (1 Pet. 2:11).

The ancient patriarchs “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” and so they looked for “a better country, that is a heavenly [one]” (Heb. 11:13-16).

Paul reminded us that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward” (Rom. 8:18). It is not the will of God that men live upon this evil-plagued planet forever. We never will be “at home” until we are with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8), and suffering helps make us “homesick.”

Henry Ward Beecher once said:

“God washes the eyes by tears until they can behold the invisible land where tears shall come no more.”

Suffering Grooms the Soul for Eternity

Suffering tempers the soul and helps prepare it for eternity. Peter wrote:

[N]ow for a little while, if necessary, ye have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

Just as precious metals are purified by the heat of a fire, so life’s trials in general and suffering for Christ in particular build strength into the soul.

Noble character does not happen by accident. Rather, it is built! Out of the fires of suffering, the human spirit may emerge as precious as gold and as strong as steel.

How Suffering Comes

(1) Some Suffering Is Brought About By Nature. Because this is so, good people (i.e., converted people) suffer in that conversion does not change our physical bodies (1 Pet. 3:21). It is the inner man that is changed and because of it the Christian is tempted as much as is the non-Christian (Rom. 6:1-17). God does not change natural order simply because a saint must suffer in consequence of violation of natural law.

(2) Some Suffering Is Brought About By One's Personal Sin. Such was the case with king David who lusted after a woman bathing, committed adultery with her, engaged in deception with her husband and finally had him killed at the front line of battle (2 Sam. 11:2ff). The summary of his agony of hardship following sin is recorded in these words: "and my sin is ever before me" (Psa. 51:3-4). As a man sows so shall he reap. We (in New Testament times) can prevent this kind of hardship in that having been cleansed by the blood of Christ in baptism (Eph. 1:3, 7; Acts 19:1-5), we can "be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). We aren't perfect and might sin, but the blood of Jesus makes us to be blameless after we confess it (1 Jn. 1:7-9). "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18). In resisting Satan's temptations, I avoid many hardships. Our Lord's position as an advocate enables us to do this (1 John 1: 1-2).

(3) Some suffering Is Brought About By Persecution. Look at what Peter says, "yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Pet. 4:15). We do not suffer because we conform to the world, but because we do not conform (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 4:3-5, 14-17; 5:8-9). I am seeing very little suffering among my brethren even though the Bible says, "all that will live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). I suspect that it is due to our lack of militancy against the world, and too much conformity to it. – *Truth Magazine*

✚ When we suffer indirectly from sin, it is either because someone sins against us, or simply because we live in a sinful world. For example, the sin of the murderer almost always brings suffering to others who were quite uninvolved in his evil. In this case, one man's sin causes suffering for several others. Another case in point is the persecutions directed against the early Christians. The Christians suffered not as evil-doers, but because of the plans of ungodly men who rejected God and Christ (cf. 1 Peter 4:15f; 2 Timothy 3:12). Here again another's evil caused suffering for many. The point is that suffering comes with living in a sinful world.

✚ Suffering also comes with living in a temporary world. The Bible teaches that this world and all it holds is not meant to be a permanent residence for man (2 Peter 3:10). It is our experience that a temporary world "falls apart" from time to time, causing a certain amount of suffering. Whether it be by natural disaster or the death of the human body, the things of a temporary existence must necessarily be connected with suffering. It is for this reason that the Bible exhorts us to set our affections on the permanent things of heaven (Colossians 3:2).

CRUCIFORM

CHURCH OF CHRIST

*Shaped BY the cross into
the shape OF the cross*



Skip Heitzig has said, "Suffering in our world makes us want to avoid it at all costs. Suffering in our personal world also makes us want to question God's love." And I think there is truth in that statement.

Because one of the things that we all struggle with when we're in pain is trying to understand why God allows suffering in this world. George Barna took a survey a while back and he asked people, "If you could ask God Almighty one question and you knew that he would give you a true answer, what question would you ask him?" Overwhelmingly the questions were things like, "Why would you allow so much evil, suffering and pain here on this earth?"

And that is not a new question at all. We find it being asked all through the Bible. For example, Gideon asked the angel, "If the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?" (Judges 6:13). Job said to God, "What have I done to you, O watcher of men? Why have you set me as your target?" (Job 7:20, NET). The Psalmist said, "Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" (Psalm 10:1). Habakkuk said, "How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you don't listen?" (1:2). And even Jesus said, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46)

Author Philip Yancey {“Where is God When it Hurts; Why? The Question That Never Goes Away.”} states that atheists will tell people that this universe is just random chance, that there’s no meaning, no purpose behind any of it. And Yancey said he noticed that these atheists are never asked to speak at places like Sandy Hook Elementary School. Because what could they possibly say that would be of any comfort to the parents?

Can you imagine somebody standing up saying, “Well, the universe is random. Bad things happen. Get used to it. Your children do not live anymore, that is just what happens.” There’s no comfort in that. No, they want to ask a Christian to speak at those places because a Christian can stand up and say, “Yes, what happened was tragic. It should never have happened. We should be angry at the sort of evil that resulted in that kind of tragedy. However, we believe that there is a good God who will make all things work together for good if you will trust him.” And there’s hope in that.

1st Peter is all about suffering. In this short letter, Peter refers to suffering about 20 times.

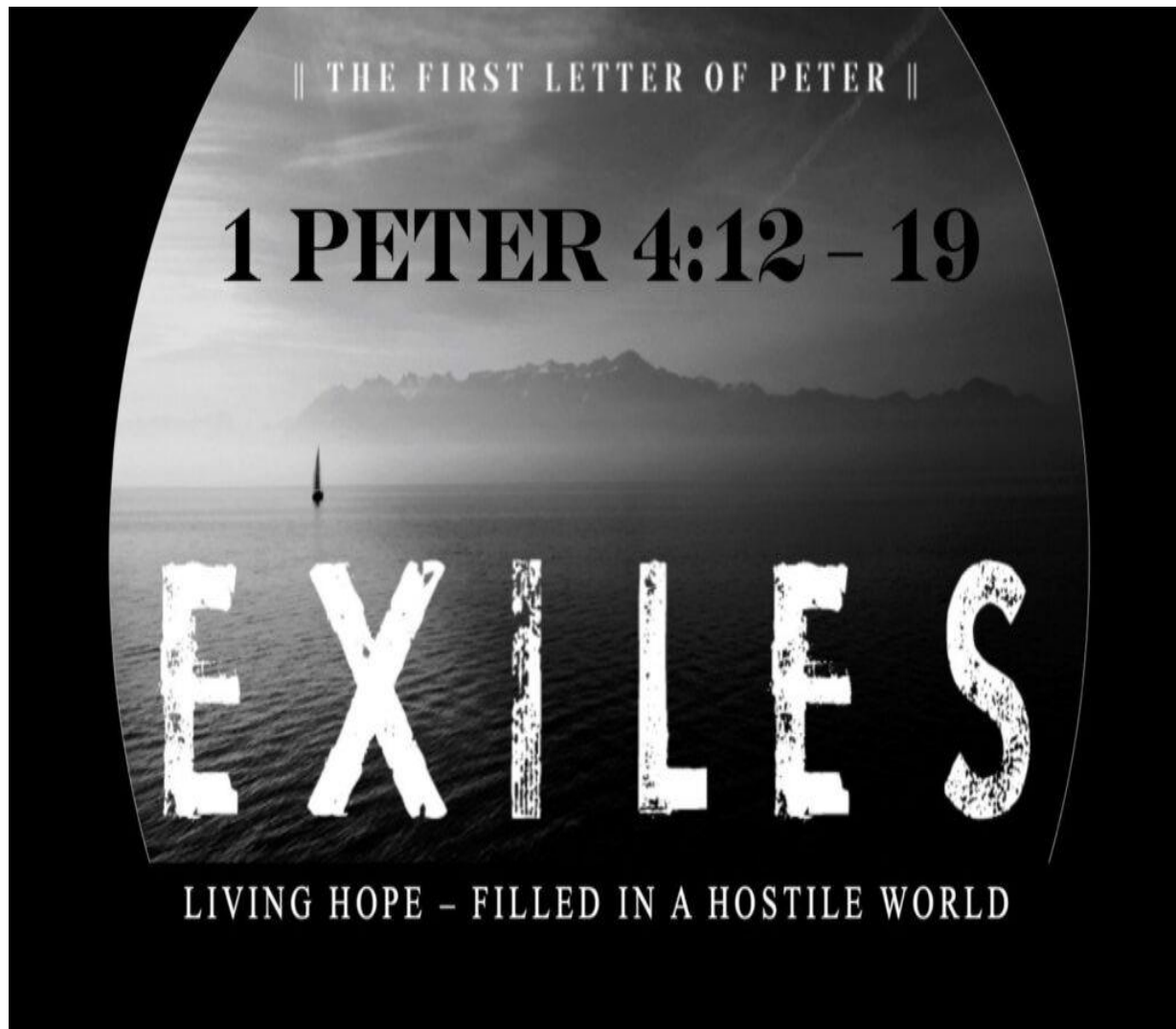
Malcolm Muggeridge once said, "As an old man, looking back on one's life, it's one of the things that strikes you most forcibly — that the only thing that is taught one anything is suffering. Not success or happiness, not anything like that. The only thing that really teaches one what life's about ... is suffering."

And I think he's right. Most of us don't learn very much from good health, happy days, money in the bank, and good fortune. We enjoy those things, but we do not really learn much from them.

But we can learn a great deal from suffering. Our text this morning is 1 Peter chapter 4, beginning with verse 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. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. 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? And 'If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?' Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good." (1 Peter 4:12-19)



In this passage and throughout this letter, Peter's primary focus is on the type of suffering that we experience because we are Christians. But I think we'll find that what Peter says about that kind of suffering relates to all of the suffering that we experience. Let's notice four things.

1. Don't Be Surprised When Suffering Comes

"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. (1 Peter 4:12)"

Peter says, "Don't be surprised when you suffer." But we are surprised, aren't we? Something bad happens to us and we're shocked. "Why did this have to happen to me? What did I do to deserve this?" I've noticed, though, that we don't usually ask those questions when something good happens to us. If you get an unexpected check in the mail, I doubt if any of you spend the rest of the day going, "Why did this happen to me? What did I do to deserve this?" But when something bad happens to us, we're caught off guard. We're surprised when trials come. But Peter says, "Don't be surprised when you suffer."

I like what Chuck Swindoll has said, "If ... we view life as a schoolroom and God as the instructor, it should come as no surprise when we encounter pop quizzes and periodic examinations." In other words, suffering is an opportunity for our faith to be tested. So don't be surprised if our teacher wants to test us every now and then.

But Peter especially wants us to know, "Do not be surprised if you suffer for being a Christian." Suffering is part of the Christian life, even painful suffering.

I think Christians in other parts of the world understand this far better than we do. Every day, 13 Christians around the world are killed because of their faith. And every day, 12 churches or Christian buildings are attacked. But we like to think here in America that if we're a Christian and we treat everybody with love and respect, then, in return, everybody else will treat us with love and respect. And we're surprised when it doesn't always work out that way. We're shocked when people who aren't Christians don't act like Christians, and they don't appreciate the fact that we are.

But we should not be surprised. We have certainly had plenty of warning. Jesus said to his apostles, "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John 15:20). Paul said to Timothy, "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (1 Timothy 3:12). John wrote, "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you." (1 John 3:12).

It's almost as if Jesus is saying, "Welcome to my world. Don't be surprised when people hate you. If you want to be my follower and have an impact and be an influence for me, you're going to have to get used to it."

Don't be surprised when suffering comes!

2. Suffering Brings Us Closer to Christ

"But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." (1 Peter 4:13-14)

*Peter says that when we suffer, we "share" in the sufferings of Christ. That word "share" is the verb form of the Greek word *κοινωνία*, which is usually translated "fellowship." Now, to most of us, "fellowship" implies something positive or happy, like a picnic or a party at someone's home. But here Peter talks about us having "fellowship" with in the sufferings of Christ. Our suffering joins us with Jesus in a way that nothing else can.*

Let me illustrate it using this diagram. We start with us on one side and Christ on the other side.

Us.....Christ

And the question for us is, "How can we get from where we are to where Christ is?" Peter wants us to understand that nothing moves us closer to Christ than when we go through hard times. It's not that suffering in and of itself brings us to Christ; it's what suffering does to us and what suffering does in us.

God allows us to go through bad times so we'll be like this:

.....**UsChrist**

God's intention is that our pain and our suffering moves us from where we are to where Christ is.

3. Suffering Leads Us to Serious Self-Examination

"If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as murderer or thief or evildoer or as meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. 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? And 'If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?'" (1 Peter 4:15-18)

Peter wants us to keep in mind that not all of our suffering comes about because of our godliness. Sometimes we bring trouble on ourselves because of the mistakes that we make.

And that's Peter's point in verse 15. If you do something wrong, you should expect to suffer.

Notice that Peter specifies four categories of wrongdoers. The first three all make sense – “let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer. But then Peter says “or as a meddler.” That doesn’t seem to fit in with the first three. A meddler is “someone who gets involved in affairs of others when he has no business being there.” Someone who is the self-appointed overseer of the affairs of others. He barges in where he’s not wanted or needed.

Peter says if you suffer because you’ve been meddling in other people’s affairs, don’t complain. Because nobody likes a busybody who is constantly sticking his nose where it doesn’t belong.

And then Peter adds, “But if you suffer as a Christian”, well, that’s a different matter. In the first century, the Romans engaged in a worship of their emperor, Caesar. In fact, in many cities, they required their subjects to say the words, “Caesar is Lord.” But, of course, Christians couldn’t say that, because Jesus Christ was their Lord. And that’s why the early church was persecuted. They insisted on saying, “Jesus is Lord.”

Even today, the people of this world hate the name of Christ. They do not want to hear it. It’s okay if you talk about God, just don’t mention the name of Jesus.

If we would renounce our allegiance to Jesus, the world would leave us alone. They don't hate us. They hate Christ in us.

And the day may soon come, if it's not already here, when Christians will have to make the same choice that the early Christians had to make. Will we boldly proclaim that Jesus Christ is our Lord, or will we keep quiet in order to save ourselves some trouble?

Peter's answer is clear. When that time comes, "Let him not be ashamed." I have to believe that as Peter wrote these words, he remembered back to that night when Jesus was arrested. While he warmed himself around the fire, a young girl said to him, "Weren't you one of his disciples?" And Peter denied knowing Jesus. He swore that he wasn't one of Jesus' followers. Three times he denied Christ.

Peter knew what it was like to feel that sense of shame because he never forgot the night he had denied his Lord. Peter wants us to know that when that moment of decision comes for us, we should not do anything that would dishonor the name of our Lord.

Verse 17 tells us judgment begins with the household of God. The Lord starts with his own children. Persecution forces us to decide where we stand and what we believe. And, in a sense, the hands of the persecutors are actually the hands of God. He allows evildoers to turn up the heat so that we can be purified by our trials. Which may not be much comfort if you are in the middle of the furnace right now, but at least it means that God is still in control.

But while it starts with us, it will not end with us. Verse 18 asks the question: "What will be the outcome for those who don't obey the gospel of God?" The answer is, they're in big trouble. God disciplines his children to make us holy, but those who aren't his children eventually have God's wrath to face.

We may suffer for a little while and then we enter into glory. But for those who don't know the Lord, this world is the closest thing to heaven they will ever know. When they die, they have absolutely nothing to look forward to but an eternity separated from God.

Suffering should lead us to some serious self-examination.

4. *Suffering Teaches Us to Trust God*

"Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good." (1 Peter 4:19)

When our trouble comes—and it comes to all of us sooner or later — we usually cannot do much about our circumstances. We cannot wave our hands and make the sick well, or put money in the bank, or to cause angry people to like us. But there is one thing we can do. In the midst of our troubles, we can entrust or commit ourselves to our faithful Creator.

That word "entrust" is actually a banking term that means to make a deposit. Think about it this way. When you go to the bank to make a deposit, you hand them your money and basically say, "I trust you to hold onto my money for me. I trust you to take care of my money so that nothing happens to it."

And we do the same thing with our lives. If we entrust ourselves to a faithful Creator, it's as if we're taking our lives and handing them over to God and saying, "I trust you to hold onto my life. I trust you to take care of me and to use this life in a way that you think is best."

I started off talking about the fact that the question we keep asking over and over is, "Why?" Why are all these things happening to me? Why I am going through this pain and suffering? And it's frustrating that God doesn't give us the answer to our questions.

The problem is, we're asking the wrong question. In John chapter 9, the disciples asked Jesus, "Why was this man born blind?" Why? But, in his answer, Jesus changed the question from, "Why?" to "How?"

"Jesus answered, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.'" (John 9:3).

How can this man's blindness be used to reveal the work of God? Man asks why. Jesus asks how. Man asks, "Why did this happen?" Jesus asks, "How can my Father's glory be displayed through this situation?"

The answer to "why" does not really help us. But knowing that God's glory can be displayed, even in the brokenness of our lives, gives us hope despite our sorry circumstances.

You will find more purpose and joy in your life if you will stop asking, "Why?" and begin asking "How?"

How does my story fit into God's greater redemption story? Because even when we can't see how our story fits into God's story of redemption, scripture promises that it always does.

In the Bible, I see a picture of all things working together for good — a good that, quite frankly, I at times do not understand. Without seeing from God's perspective, I can't answer how that story or any other story, including mine, fits into his overall story.

But the Bible does tell us that God is able to use things he hates — to accomplish the things he loves. And he does this on a regular basis. It's only when we bring our pain to him that we can find the strength that we need to get through it.

And so, I encourage you this morning to change your question from why to how. Maybe you have never thought about how God could use what you are going through for His glory. Maybe this whole concept is totally new to you.

As I read the quote earlier, "The only thing that really teaches us what life is about ... is suffering."

Suffering Makes Us Homesick

Suffering sharpens our awareness that this **earth is not a permanent home**.

Peter sought to encourage early Christians who were being persecuted not to despair. He reminded them that they were but “sojourners and pilgrims” upon this earth (1 Pet. 2:11).

The ancient patriarchs “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” and so they looked for “a better country, that is a heavenly [one]” (Heb. 11:13-16).

Paul reminded us that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward” (Rom. 8:18). It is not the will of God that men live upon this evil-plagued planet forever. We never will be “at home” until we are with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8), and suffering helps make us “homesick.”

Henry Ward Beecher once said:

“God washes the eyes by tears until they can behold the invisible land where tears shall come no more.”

Suffering Grooms the Soul for Eternity

Suffering tempers the soul and helps prepare it for eternity. Peter wrote:

[N]ow for a little while, if necessary, ye have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

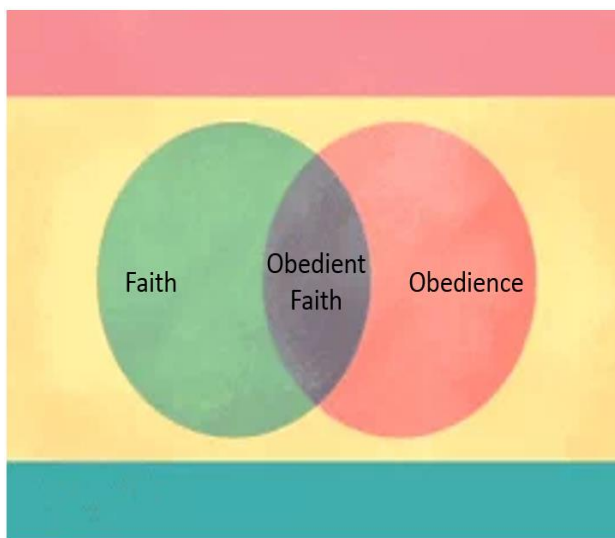
Just as precious metals are purified by the heat of a fire, so life’s trials in general and suffering for Christ in particular build strength into the soul.

Noble character does not happen by accident. Rather, it is built! Out of the fires of suffering, the human spirit may emerge as precious as gold and as strong as steel.

AT THE NEXUS OF GRACE & GLORY

Five Steps For Saving:

- HEARING:
- Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27
- BELIEVING:
- Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16
- REPENTING:
- Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3
- CONFESSING:
- Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37
- BAPTISM:
- Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38



O That Will Be Glory

2. *Wh* O that will be glory for me, e grace,

I an Glory for me, glory for me; ce,

When by His grace I shall look on His face, e

That will be glory, be glory for me. me.

