

Seize the Opportunity
1 Peter 1:6-21

ETS: Suffering is a way to prove your faith in Christ

ESS: How you respond to suffering for Christ proves your faith in Christ

OSS: I want people to understand that suffering enables them to prove their faith

PQ: Do you see suffering as a way to prove your faith?

UW: Proofs

ME

Open Doors USA released their annual [World Watch List report, 2021](#)

- According to the report “More than 340 million of our Christian brothers and sisters live in places where they experience high levels of persecution and discrimination. That’s 1 in 8 Christians, worldwide.
- In the article titled: “COVID-19 exposes persecution” the report cites “In India, more than 100,000 Christians received relief aid from Open Doors partners to help them through the pandemic. Of these believers, 80 percent reported to World Watch List researchers that they were dismissed from food

distribution points. Some walked miles and hid their Christian identity to get food elsewhere. Another 15 percent received food aid, but reported other discrimination, such as being passed over for employment.

- *The report went on to state:*
 - *“Being discovered as a Christian is a death sentence in **North Korea**. If you aren’t killed instantly, you will be taken to a labor camp as a political criminal.”*
 - *In **Afghanistan**, living openly as a Christian is impossible. Essentially, converts have two options: flee the country or risk being killed.*
 - *In **Somalia**, Just being suspected of converting to Christianity is a death warrant. Members of a believer’s family, clan or community will harass, intimidate or even kill them. Female converts are at high risk for rape and forced marriage.”*

WE

Thankfully, America is NOT in the list of the top 50 countries where Christians face persecution, but there are “winds” blowing through our culture that show an increasing hostility towards True Christianity in our country.

GOD

Turn to **1 Peter 1**

Peter knew that difficult times were ahead. In fact, the church had already had a taste of persecution. Many had to flee their homelands for places of safety.

- Many found it difficult to find work because of their beliefs.
- Many had been ostracized by their families and friends for their belief that Jesus Christ was the only way to God.
- Many were look at with disdain and scorn. They were “**exiles**” in the land.

Times were increasingly tough for Christians who preached that Jesus was the “only way” to God.

1 Peter 1:6 You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials”

What are they to be “rejoicing in?”

- **1 Peter 1:3** -- Believers have been “**birthed**” into a “**Living hope**”

- The reason for our living hope is the resurrection of Jesus Christ!
- **1 Peter 1:4** -- Believers have been “**birthed**” into an “**inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.**”
- **1 Peter 1:5** -- Believers are “**being guarded by God’s power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.**”

Question: How is a believer “**being guarded by God’s power**” YET at the same time “**suffer[ing] grief in various trials**”

- Answer: We are “**being guarded by God’s power**” for our inheritance in the future NOT necessarily against “**suffer[ing] grief in various trials**” whilst on earth.

Prosperity Gospel = God wants to give you your best life now in terms of health and wealth.

Biblical Gospel = Your best life is in eternity with God and you may, probably will, face suffering in this life.

WHY does God permit His children to endure “**Various trials**” resulting in possible suffering?

- **1 Peter 1:7** so that the *proven* character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though

perishable, *is refined by fire*—may result in praise, glory, and honor *at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*”

Suffering Provides the Opportunity to Prove Your Faith

Christians live by FAITH, not by sight!

1 Peter 1:8-9 “Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, **WHY?** **9** because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

- We are “receiving the salvation of our souls.”

The salvation = Mystery in the past

1 Peter 1:10-12 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who prophesied about the grace that would come to you, searched and carefully investigated. **(HOW)** **11** They inquired into what time or what circumstances the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating when he testified in advance to the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. **12** It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you. These things have now been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—angels long to catch a glimpse of these things.”

We have deliverance from our sins because **Christ suffered**

- Christ suffered the **wrath of God** for our sins
- Christ suffered the **wrath of religious leaders** for claiming to be God
- Christ suffered the **wrath** of the **government** who did not want to be bothered
- Christ suffered the **rejection** of his **family, friends** and **most** of the disciples

The **prophets** didn't understand the passages about the suffering servant.

- They couldn't conceive how the Messiah could/would suffer

After the **resurrection** of Christ, *it all made sense.*

- What the prophets did not understand now was crystal clear

Christ suffered so that we can have eternal life.

- If the **religious leaders, government, friends** and **family** of Christ brought **suffering** upon **Him**, it is possible that **His followers** may experience **suffering** from the **same groups.**

We have a **couple options**:

- **Run** from the suffering or **Embrace** suffering

Peter calls us to **embrace** suffering for Christ!

WHY should a believer embrace suffering for the cause of Christ?

Suffering Provides the Opportunity to Prove Your Faith

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, with your *minds* ready for action

How do we “**Prove our faith**” in the midst of suffering?

Be Prepared

One way we “**Prove our faith**” in the midst of suffering is to “**prepare your minds**”

Peter understood persecution. He also understood what it was like to **fail** in the midst of persecution.

The night that **Jesus was betrayed**, He and Peter had some conversations. Jesus, in his conversation with Peter, tried to **prepare him** for what was *going to happen* to him that night.

- There as they ate the *last Supper* Jesus told Peter in **Luke 22:31-32** ““Simon, Simon, look out. Satan has asked to sift you like wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” (CSB)
- Jesus was trying to **prepare** Peter for what was about to happen.
 - Unfortunately, Peter did not listen and, as you know, denied Christ three times that night.
- However, notice what Jesus told Peter. He told him “**when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.**”

When the time came for Peter’s faith in Christ to be PROVEN, he denied Christ three times!

- WHY? Peter had not “**prepared his mind**”!

HOW did **Christ** tell Peter to “**Prepare his mind**”?

On the night of Christ’s arrest he specifically told Peter—on more than one occasion—“**pray, so that you won’t fall into temptation**”

- However, instead of praying Peter (and the others) kept falling asleep!
 - Peter (and the others) were *NOT* “**PREPARED for action**”

That word “**prepare**” is sometime translated “gird.”

- In the Greek it literally reads, “Gird the loins of you mind.”

People back then **didn't wear pants or shorts**; they wore robe-like outfits. The problem with that type of dress is it is *hard to run*. It is hard to do anything swiftly with those robes on.

How could you “**go into action**” if you need to?

- They put on a **belt** and **tucked** in their outer **garments** at the waist
-

Peter is saying “**Tuck in your clothes!**” Be ready for action. Be on guard.”

WHAT are we to **prepare? **Our minds!****

Your actions begin in your mind!

- Have you ever found yourself thinking about something and the next thing you know it comes out of your mouth or you do the action?
 - **Mind:** “**This TV show is getting boring**”

- **Action:** Grab the **remote** and change the channel OR, *if you are married, you ask your **spouse** if you can change the channel!*

Thoughts in the mind precede action!

Someone once said:

Sow a thought, reap and action

Sow and action, reap a habit

Sow a habit, reap a character

Sow a character, reap a destiny.

HOW do you “Prepare you mind for action”?

Jesus told Peter to “PRAY, so that you won’t fall into temptation” (Lk. 22:40)

How does prayer help us not to fall into temptation?

Prayer requires...Focusing on God—requires the mind’s attention

HOW do you pray so as to “prepare you mind for action”?

We must prepare for what lies ahead by preparing our minds

- We **prepare our minds** by praying **thanking** God
WHAT we are: “**chosen, sanctified, exiles, guarded by God’s power**”
- We **prepare our minds** by praying **thanking** God for
WHAT He has done: “**Given us a new birth, an inheritance.**”
- We **prepare our minds** by praying CONFESSING our
sins.
 - Confession keeps us walking humbly before God
 - Confession keeps the communication open
between us and God

What we pray for reveals what is in our mind!

- Are you praying “**Thy Kingdom Come**” or “*MY kingdom come*”
 - Are your prayers focused on your role in the Kingdom of God (i.e., the salvation of souls, opportunities to be a blessing, the desire to be used by God, etc.) or are they focus on seeing **Your kingdom come** (e.g., a raise, a promotion, better health, etc.)

A mind that is “**prepared for Action**” is praying for “**Thy kingdom come**”!

WHEN did Jesus ask Peter to “[pray, so that you won’t fall into temptation](#)”?

- BEFORE the soldiers arrived; before Peter met the servant girl in the courtyard of the high priest later that night!
- The time to “[prepare our minds](#)” is NOW!
 - [Prepare our minds](#) BEFORE you face the day!
 - [Prepare our minds](#) BEFORE you face that situation that may TRIGGER you to fall into sin (of course, you ought to avoid the situation if at all possible!)

We are in a war—not against people but against spiritual wickedness.

- **Satan** knows that he cannot destroy us because we are “[guarded by God’s power](#)”; therefore, what he is trying to do is neutralize us.
- Satan wants us to be **neutralized** by lulling us into complacency—just like Peter was lulled into complacency the night Jesus was betrayed. Therefore we must “Prepare our minds for action” and we do that by “staying alert”
 - **1 Peter 5:8** “[Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.](#)”

Suffering Provides the Opportunity to Prove Your Faith

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, with your *minds* ready for action, be sober-minded

How do we “Prove our faith” in the midst of suffering?

Be Sober Minded

What does it mean to “be sober minded”?

To “be sober minded” means to be “be restrained, be self-controlled, *be self-possessed under all circumstances.*”

Have ever been the first one to get some news and you go as fast as you can to tell your friends?

- We all like to be the *first to know!*
 - We want to be the “First to know” so we can be the “first to tell.”
 - Being the “First to tell” makes it seem like you are “in the know”

In the era of 24 hour news and social media, the goal is be the **first out** with the information.

- **Prov. 18:17** “The first to state his case seems right until another comes and cross-examines him.”

- **Reality:** The *first headline* you hear is likely the one that you will remember.
- **Reality:** The first one to “Set the narrative” often controls the narrative.

The **New Yorker** has an article titled: [“How Headlines Change the Way We Think”](#)

- Author Maria Konnikova wrote: “By now, everyone knows that a headline determines how many people will read a piece, particularly in this era of social media. *But, more interesting, a headline changes the way people read an article and the way they remember it....* Psychologists have long known that first impressions really do matter—what we see, hear, feel, or experience in our first encounter with something colors how we process the rest of it. Articles are no exception..

According to Konnikova, headlines can....

- *Affect what existing knowledge is activated in your head by drawing attention to certain details or facts.*
- *Influence your mindset by its choice of phrasing so that you later recall details that coincide with what you were expecting.*

[Have you heard the term “Clickbait”?](#)

- The main purpose of “Clickbait” is to attract attention and encourage visitors to click on a link to a particular web page.
- You’ve probably fallen prey to “Clickbait”.
 - You clicked on a link but what you got was very little information and bunch of ads in your face OR an article that was NOT all about what it led you to believe.

*Konnikova cites this example of a **clickbait** headline: “Air pollution now leading cause of lung cancer”*

- This headline ran in the U.K. paper *Daily Express*.
 - The article, however, said no such thing, or, rather, not exactly. Instead, it reported that pollution was a leading “environmental” cause; other causes, like smoking, are still the main.

Many will see that headline and **not** click on it, but the headline will simply **affirm** what they **believe**—*lung cancer is caused by air pollution*.

- Others will **click on it**—which is the goal—but may not read past the first couple of paragraphs to see that really “**pollution was a leading “environmental” cause**” of lung cancer.

What’s the point?

- We live in a “first to know” age
 - News outlets want to be the first to “break a story”
 - People on social media want to be the first to share the fresh news
 - More often than not, the story is **not accurate**
- We in an age when accuracy does not count as much as *setting the narrative* is more important than the facts.

How can a Christ-follower be “Sober minded”?

- Be “slow to speak, quick to listen and slow to anger” (James 1:19)
 - **Gathering the information from different sources**—which may take time
 - **Analyzing the situation** —which may take time
 - **Respond appropriately**
 - If you must respond, do so in a way that will be “salt and light”

Suffering Provides the Opportunity to Prove Your Faith

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, with your *minds* ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the

grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

How do we “Prove our faith” in the midst of suffering?

Be Hopeful

Psychologist William Marston asked three thousand people, "What have you to live for?" He was shocked to discover that 94% were simply enduring the present while they **waited for the future**—

- waited for something to happen—
- waited for "next year" –
- waited for a "better time" –
- waited for "someone to die" –
- waited "for tomorrow," unable to see that all anyone ever has is today, because yesterday is gone and tomorrow exists only in hope.

ACTIONS: “prepare your minds for action” and “keep sober in spirit”

- **COMMAND** of what we are to be.
 - **1 Peter 1:13c** set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Imagine you like to run. You hear about a race that is to be held. You go to get some information about the race. When you go you ask “how long is the race?” the person responds “*oh, we don’t know, we just thought we would run a race.*”

- Would you be frustrated?
 - Yes because you would have **no way of knowing** what was expected of you to win. There would not be a finish line that you could race toward.
 - *If there is not at finish line, how can there be a race?*

One of the things that is characteristic of the **current philosophy** that is underlying our culture is the belief that there is **no conclusion**: that things will continually go on and on.

- We live and die and go onto nothingness.

Have you noticed that in the last decade or so that many of the **futuristic movies** include a dark, hopeless world?

- Movies like *1984, Mad Max, The Matrix, I am Legend, the Book of Eli, Real Player One, etc.*)
 - The philosophy that many have bought into—either knowingly or unknowingly—is a philosophy without hope!

Believers have hope!

- It is hope based on “nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. O dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On Christ the solid rock I stand: all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand”

What is the basis of our hope in Jesus Christ? His resurrection!

- Peter refers twice to Christ’s resurrection in this first chapter!

Peter commands us to “set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

WHEN will that revelation be? At the return of Jesus Christ!

The return of Jesus Christ is a certain thing. Jesus said “I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also.”

- Unlike the world *we know that there is an end* and in the end *Jesus Christ will reign supreme.*
- Unlike the world *we have hope.*

- Unlike the world we know that *we will see Jesus in all of his glory* when He returns to this earth in glory and power to rule and to reign.

WHY does Peter command us to “set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”?

- Because by fixing our hope, we will have **patience**.
 - Paul stated in **Romans 8:25** “Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience”. (CSB)
- Because by fixing our hope, we will have **boldness**. **2 Corinthians 3:12** “Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness.” (CSB)
- Because by fixing our hope, we will **prepare** ourselves. **1 John 3:3** “And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure.” (CSB)

Suffering Provides the Opportunity to Prove Your Faith

How do we “Prove our faith” in the midst of suffering?

1 Peter 1:14 “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance.

Be Obedient

Mark Twain encountered a ruthless business man from Boston during his travels who boasted that nobody ever got in his way once he determined to do something. He said “Before I die I mean to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I’m gonna climb Mount Sinai. And when I am up there I’m gonna read the Ten Commandments aloud at the top of my voice!”

- Unimpressed, **Twain** responded, “I got a better idea. Stay in Boston and keep ‘em”

Spiritually speaking, the world in which the people were living in is not much different than ours.

Peter is writing to a group of people who are scattered throughout the **northern portion** of the **Roman Empire**. They are *not* living in the area of Israel. They are *not living in Jerusalem*.

- For Example, in **Asia**—which is another of the provinces to which this letter is addressed—there were many **Greek states** whose **chief expression** was the **cult of Rome** and **Augustus**.
 - All of the cities that Peter names in addressing the Christians were Roman provinces and were steeped in paganism.
- **Christianity** was **not** the main religion.
 - In fact, it was just a small fraction.

- In these areas you only had a **handful of house churches**.
 - There were not big cathedrals; there was not a Christian church on every corner.
There was little Christian influence on these areas at this point.

As you can see, it would have been very easy for a Christian to be “**conformed**” to the culture around them.

- It would be easier to “**conform**” to the culture so they would be **accepted**.
- It would be easier to “**conform**” to the culture so they could find **work**.
- It would be easier to “**conform**” to the culture so they could have a **social life**.
- It would be easier to “**conform**” to the culture so they could have a chance of being in a **political office**.

The temptation to be “**conformed**” to the culture was great—just as it is now. Today, as our culture is increasing becoming non-Christian, many Christians are finding themselves “**conforming**” the culture. Their rationale is:

- It is easier to “**conform**” to the culture so they can be **accepted**.

- It is easier to “conform” to the culture so they could have a **social life**.
- It is easier to “conform” to the culture so they could have a chance of being in a **political office**.

Literally, Peter is telling the Christians “do not be conforming.”

- As the **NLT** states: “Don’t slip back into your old ways of doing evil; you didn’t know any better then.”
(NLT)
 - Yes, the pressure is intense, but don’t give into the pressure.

Stacy Allison, first American woman to reach Everest's summit. “You've got to decide sometimes in your life when it's okay not to listen to what other people are saying. ... If I had listened to other people, I wouldn't have climbed Mt. Everest.”

We are to be “salt and light” but IF there is **no difference** between us and the unbelievers, we *cannot have any effect upon them*.

- Jesus said in **Matthew 5:13** “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It’s no longer good for anything but

to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.
(CSB)

- Tasteless salt is like lukewarm water—it is no good for nothing!

I ran across this poem that unfortunately summarizes a lot of people who claim Christianity:

Ye call me Master and obey me not,
Ye call me Light and see me not;
Ye call me Way and walk not;
Ye call me Life and desire me not;
Ye call me Wise and follow me not;
Ye call me Fair and love me not;
Ye call me Rich and ask me not;
Ye call me Eternal and seek me not;
Ye call me Gracious and trust me not;
Ye call me Noble and serve me not;
Ye call me Mighty and honor me not;
Ye call me Just and fear me not;
If I condemn you BLAME ME not!

The point is that there **must** be a **difference**.

HOW are we supposed to live in obedience?

Peter tells us to live “**As obedient children**” or literally “**As children of obedience.**”

Have you ever noticed the similarities between a child and parent?

- There are **physical features** that are **similar**. For example, I have my mother’s nose—not literally of course! Some children’ have their father’s mouth or their mother’s eyes, etc.
- Not only are there physical features, but there are **mannerisms**. A child may react the same way her father does under pressure. A child may have the same mannerism of his mother.
- Then there is the fact that the child has the **same name** as the parents or at least one of the parents. This shows identity with that parent or parents.

We are to be like our Father in heaven.

- **Paul** tells us in Romans, Galatians and Ephesians that we have been adopted into God’s family.
 - That means we have the same “**last name**” as our Father in heaven so to speak.
 - That means we exhibit some of the **mannerism** of our father.
 - That means that we are to **look like, act like, talk like and be like** our Father in heaven.

In short, we are to be “obedient children.”

A Tokyo girl had saved money to go to Paris to see the “Mona Lisa” painting. But when she heard that the painting was visiting Tokyo, she went to see it. *Then* she went to a plastic surgeon with the \$500 she had saved to make her face look like the painting!

If we are going to have an impact on our society, if we are going to turn the tide, it will be by living as “Children of Obedience.”

- That is exactly what the **early church** did.
 - They **did not try to take over** the **political machinery** of Rome; they simply lived out their obedience to God the Father even though it often meant persecution.

Suffering Provides the Opportunity to Prove Your Faith

HOW do we “Prove our faith” in the midst of suffering?

1 Peter 1:15-16 “But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy (e.g., set apart) in all your conduct; 16 for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy.

Be Holy

A believer is “in Christ” and being “in Christ” means that God sees you as HOLY

- You don’t have to pray “Lord, help me to be holy”.
NO! You are already holy!
 - Instead, pray stating “I will live as a holy person before you.”

To be “holy” does not mean to be weird, it means to be “set apart.”

- It means to be **dedicated** to the God.

How do people see God’s holiness reflected in us?

- Peter answers that question: “you also are to be holy in all your conduct.”
 - In other words, in your way of life; in how you conduct yourself.
 - The writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers in **Hebrews 13:7** “Remember your leaders who have spoken God’s word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith.” (CSB)

Why should I Be Holy?

- What should drive me to live differently than the world?

- What should motivate me to the **right thing**?
- What should **motivate** me to be **willing** to be **unpopular**, to be different, to be **uncomfortable** at time?
 - Why should I take these steps?

1 Peter 1:17-21: “If you appeal to the Father who judges impartially according to each one’s work, you are to conduct yourselves in reverence during your time living as strangers. 18 For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was revealed in these last times for you. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” (CSB)

Reason because of what Jesus did for you!

- In a world that **spit** on **Jesus**, He went to the cross for you
- In a world that **rejected** Jesus, He went to the cross for you
- In a world that **mocked** **Jesus**, He died for you.
- In a world that **laughed** at **Jesus**, He died for you.

Jesus Christ, the “**unblemished and spotless lamb**” **died** for you.

Jesus Christ, the “**unblemished and spotless lamb**” has **redeemed** you.

Jesus Christ, the “**unblemished and spotless lamb**” has **enabled you** to be a part of His family.

Jesus did all that for you. It cost Him everything. **That should motivate us to live a Holy Life in this New Word.**

David Brainerd, the famous missionary to the American Indians, proclaimed this truth throughout his ministry. He said, “I never got away from Jesus and Him crucified in my preaching. I found that once these people were gripped by the great evangelical meaning of Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf, I did not have to give them many instructions about changing their behavior.”

When Charles Spurgeon lay on his deathbed, he testified to a friend, “My theology now is found in four little words: “JESUS died for ME.” I don’t say this is all I would preach if I were to be raised up again, but it is **more than enough** for me to die upon.”

WE

Peter gave steps to take to be an example in the midst of persecution.

- Be alert
- Be prepared
- Be obedient
- Be hopeful
- Be holy.

PQ: Do you see suffering as an opportunity?

- Or are you still so in love with this world and so enamored with being a part of this world that you are not impacting it for Christ.
 - Are you still conformed to this world?
- Are you are afraid of taking a stand for Christ because that would make you unpopular.
- Are you are afraid of taking a stand for Christ because that would make you uncomfortable?

If so, you cannot have an impact for Christ. If so, you need to rethink about what Christ did for you. The world cannot give nothing more than perishable things, but as Peter points out, Christ has redeemed us with the imperishable things.

- Who is worth living for: the world or Christ?
- What will last for eternity: the world or Christ?

- What are you preparing for: now or eternity?

PQ: Do you see suffering as an opportunity?