

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

ETS: Peter gave some final words on suffering for the Christian.

ESS: We cannot allow fear of suffering to stifle our witness for Christ.

OSS: I want Christians to be bold for Christ and not afraid to suffer for Christ's sake.

PQ: Are you being bold for Christ?

UW: Ways

### ME

Does anyone like pain?

If you had to **pick** pain, which is more painful?

- Emotional Pain (incl. Spiritual pain)
- Physical pain

They are **both painful** in their own ways!

- **Emotional** pain is **DEEP**—it **rocks** your **soul**
  - Emotional pain can **lead** to **physical pain**
- **Physical** pain is on the surface
  - **Physical** pain can **lead** to **emotional** pain

### WE

It is very possible that there is **physical pain** or **emotional pain** that occurred a long time ago that YOU may still feel today!

- **Emotional** pain of **betrayal**
- **Emotion** pain of a loss of a loved one
- **Emotional** pain of a loss of a **relationship**
- **Physical** pain from a **broken bone** that didn't heal correctly
- **Emotional pain** of **mental abuse** via **bullying** in school, **abusive** parents or an abusive **spouse**
- Physical pain from a **car accident** years ago.

**WE live in a world filled with PAIN!**

Some of the pain you **suffer** may be OUR own **fault!**

- You may suffer **emotional pain** because of **bad choices** you made as a young person
- You may suffer **physical pain** because you did something **dumb**
  - Part of my back pain was due to the fact that I was into BMX bikes as a kid.....(Story)

**WE live in a world filled with PAIN!**

As you have **grown** older, you are likely trying to everything you can to avoid pain!

- You **think twice** before doing something “**Crazy**”
- You are much **more risk-adverse** than when you were younger

REALITY: We do what we can to **avoid pain**

- Get a **slight headache** you take “**Headache medicine**”
- Struggle with **old injuries** or a recent injury you take a “**pain pill**”
- Some people **smoke weed** or a **line of cocaine** to help them cope with emotional pain
- Some **get drunk** so as to avoid feeling the pain

REALITY: We do what we can to **avoid pain**—**UNLESS** we see a **NEED** to **endure** pain!

Have you suffered pain on purpose?

- My **brother-in-law** is here today and he served in the **military**—like many of you.
  - He suffered **pain on purpose** (e.g., ran the miles, did the push-ups, etc.)
    - WHY? To be prepared to fight for his country.
- Some here may have suffered **emotional** pain on purpose
  - You were in an **abusive situation**.

- You **sought counseling**, but to no avail
  - The **other party** wouldn't seek counseling or wouldn't respond
- You were **worried** about your **safety**; you may be worried about the **safety** of your **children**.
  - Finally, after much **prayer, patience, and trying** you had to **file** for a **separation**.
    - Maybe that **separation** led to a **divorce**

WE will **INTENTIONALLY SUFFER PAIN** if WE feel the **REASON** is worth it!

What about **suffering hostility** or **persecution** for Christ?

- **HOW** do you make it through suffering for Christ?
- **WHY** would a person suffer for Christ?

VIDEO: Canadian Pastor being arrested for “Illegal gathering” due to COVID-19

It is easy to say “**I live in America and that will never happen to me.**”

- I have “Freedom of Religion”

## What if IT DOES HAPPEN HERE?

- What if we are told we must “affirm” certain lifestyles or else we cannot meet?
  - After all, COVID-19 demonstrated that many in our government deem church meetings a “non-essential” gathering
- What if we are told that our mere presence in the community is “Triggering” or “Offensive” to some?
  - After all, we are living in the age in which everyone is “Offended” or a “Victim” or “Triggered” and as a result everyone else is supposed to change so as to not “offend” or “Trigger” the person.

## What if Persecution DOES HAPPEN HERE?

- COVID-19 resulted in many churches being taken to court for meeting...
  - Fortunately, all those cases have been thrown out, but WHAT IF that is not the case the NEXT TIME?
    - [Headline, January 28, 2021 “Bill Gates Warns the ‘Next Pandemic’ is coming after COVID-19—and How to Stop it.”](#)

## What if hostile increases to an uncomfortable level?

- WOULD YOU be willing to suffer for CHRIST?
- WHY would YOU be willing to suffer for Christ?
- HOW do YOU make it through suffering for Christ?

## GOD

Turn to **1 Peter 4**

Peter is writing to people who are **suffering**—they are in **PAIN**

- Suffering because they have **chosen** to **respond** to God’s **conviction** for their sin and have put their faith and **trust** in **Christ!**
  - **RESULT: Suffering**

**1 Peter 4:12:** “Dear friends, don’t be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you.”

**FACT: SIGNING-UP** to be a Christ-following is **SIGNING-UP** to **SUFFER**.

- This is **NOT** the reality that will **attract large crowds**, but it is **TRUTH**.
  - **TRUTH** is like **SURGERY!**
    - **IT** hurts, but it is necessary if you are going to survive!

Remember, Satan is the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4)

- Satan is the “god” of the world system
  - We live in a world under the sway of the world system
- In **1 Peter 5:8**, Peter states that Satan, the “god of this world”, is “looking for anyone he can devour.”
- In **1 Peter 5:8**, Peter states that Satan, the “god of this world”, is the “adversary” of Christ-followers

We live in a world system that is under the **sway** of Satan.

- Therefore, the **world** does **not accept** Christ the **only way** to heaven
- The world does not accept such thing as **absolute truth**
- The world system **teaches** that there are **many ways** to “whatever” is up there

**Our message** is **opposite** of what you hear in the **media**.

- Therefore, we as believers should not “**be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you.**”

- We should not be “shocked” about what is happening!

Peter states “don’t be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you.”

- This is **normal**.
- WE are the ones who are **challenging** the “**normal**” things of the world.
  - It is “**normal**” for the world to act the way it does because it is under the **sway of the evil one**

We are calling people to live “**abnormal**” lives.

- We are the ones calling a **materialistic world** to **forsake materialism**.
- We are the ones who are calling a world **addicted to leisure and self-fulfillment** to **giving themselves** over to **someone else**—Jesus Christ.
- We are the ones who are calling a “**sight-oriented**” world to believe in that which they **cannot see**.
- We are calling a **world of relativism** to believe **absolute truth**.
- We are calling a world that **craves options** to **only One Way**

- We are calling a world to place their **faith and trust** in Jesus Christ *rather* than themselves.

And the reality is that many **will not accept** what we are calling them to do.

- On the other hand, **some will**.

The reality is that those who **REFUSE to accept** God's truth will, in some cases, make it **difficult** for those who **continue to spread the Gospel**.

- Why? Because they follow the “**god of this world**” who is seeking “**Anyone he can to devour.**”

**Peter** says we should **not be surprise** when we **suffer for the sake of Christ!**

How do YOU make it through suffering for Christ?  
**Respond to Suffering For Christ with Rejoicing**

**1 Peter 4:13** “**Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.**”

This sounds **odd!** How can a person **rejoice** when they are **suffering**?

- How can a person **rejoice** when they are being **beaten** or **arrested** for the **cause** of Christ?
- How can a person **rejoice** when their **co-workers** or a **family member** ridicules them for being a **Christian**?
- How can a person **rejoice** for **loosing** their **job** when they took a **stand for Christ**?

**1 Peter 4:13** “**Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.**”

**Q:** How can a person **rejoice** when they are **suffering** for Christ?

**A:** *Suffering is another way for us to identify with Christ and draw closer to Him.*

Some of our **greatest growth** as believers come during times of **suffering**.

- God often allows **suffering** to come into our lives to **stretch us**, to **mature us**, to **test us** so that, if we will hold onto Him, we will grow stronger in our faith.

**Jesus**, continued doing the will of God the Father during His times of suffering.

- When He was **tempted** in the **desert**—**suffering from 40 days** without food and water—He **stood strong** against the temptations of the devil.
- When He was in the **Garden of Gethsemane** knowing that the soldiers were on their way and that His **death was eminent**,
  - He continued **to do God’s will** and not run for His life.
- Jesus **suffered** on the **cross** and His suffering and death made eternal life available to us!

When WE suffer for the cause of Christ, we **identify** with what Christ endured.

When WE suffer for the cause of Christ, we **grow closer to Christ!**

Have you ever been in a situation with a group of strangers when something bad happens?

- The tornado sirens go off and you run for cover and the tornado devastates your neighborhood.
  - What happens?
    - You start to **bond** to with neighbors in a way you never bonded before.
      - You start to try to **help** your neighbors with whatever you have.
      - You **cry** with your neighbors

- You **talk** to your neighbors

You may have lived there for YEARS and never really knew your neighbors but in the **midst** of your **suffering**, you **bonded** with them.

**COMMON** suffering **BONDS** People together.

WHEN you **suffer** because of Christ, your **BOND** with Christ grows stronger!

- Because of suffering FOR Christ, you now have a **point of identification** *with* Christ you never had before.!

**Peter's Challenge:** If God has allowed suffering to come into your life because of your witness for Christ—**rejoice!**

- Paul viewed the “**Fellowship of Christ's Suffering**” as a **privilege**, a gift from God!

**Peter counted suffering as a blessing.**

- In **Acts 5** Peter and the other apostles are thrown into the **public jail**.
  - But then an **angel** of the Lord **freed** them.
    - So they **returned the next day** and began **preaching again** in the Temple.
      - Again they were **apprehended** and stood before the **Council**. Peter

proclaimed to the Council that they must obey God rather than man and thus they were going to continue to preach.

One of the Council members, **Gamaliel**, told the counsel to let the men go because if they were of God there was no stopping them. If however, they were not, then they would be stopped as others had been in the past.

- **Act 5:40-41** states: “After they called in the apostles and had them flogged, they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. <sup>41</sup> Then they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin, *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be treated shamefully on behalf of the Name.*”
- Why did Peter consider it a **blessing** to suffer?
  - Because he was **suffering** for the **name** of **Christ**—the name that is above every name.

## **Respond to Suffering For Christ with Rejoicing**

### WHY?

**1 Peter 4:13** “Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, *so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.*”

Is it possible for a person to be an adult and still be IMMATURE? YES!

- What is a characteristic of an IMMATURE adult?
  - Immature adults are not willing to **postpone pleasure!**

**Immature adults will run up excessive credit card debts** on things they DON'T need but rather things they want!

- **Immature adults** will ignore their families for fun nights out with their buddies
- **Immature adults** will NOT show up for work if they have something that comes up that they want to do.
- **Immature adults** focus on the PRESENT
  - Their PRESENT WANTS
  - Their PRESENT PLEASURE

**Mature** people know that life includes some “**postponed pleasures.**” We pay a price *today* in order to have enjoyments in the *future*.

- The **piano student** may not enjoy practicing scales by the hour, but he looks forward to the **pleasure of playing beautiful music** one day.

- The **athlete** may not **enjoy exercising** and **practicing his skills**, but he looks forward to winning the game by doing his best.

*Christians have something even better: **our very sufferings will one day be transformed into glory, “so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.”**<sup>1</sup>*

You see, what is going to happen is God is going to *transform* our suffering here on earth into glory.

- Just like a **woman** whose **suffering in giving birth** to a child is **transformed** into **joy** when that child is born.
- Just like that thorn-in-the-flesh for **Paul** gave him power and glory to carry on his mission.

The REASON we should be willing to SUFFER for Christ NOW, is because ONE DAY our Suffering will result in **“GREAT JOY”!**

- WHEN is that day going to happen?
  - PETER: **“When His glory is revealed”** = the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ!
    - WE will be with HIM at his 2<sup>nd</sup> coming!

---

<sup>1</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1989. *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (1 Pe 4:13). Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

How do YOU make it through suffering for Christ?

## **Respond to Suffering For Christ with Rejoicing**

### WHY?

**1 Peter 4:14** “If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you”

WHY should you “*Respond to Suffering for Christ with Rejoicing*”

- Because you are “**Blessed**”

HOW are you “**Blessed**”

- You are “**Blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you**”

SUFFERING for Christ, creates a **stronger BOND** between You and Christ because

- You are **IDENTIFYING** with Him in suffering.
- You are **experiencing** the Holy Spirit (“**Spirit of glory**”) like Christ!

Jesus said in **John 12:49** “**For I have not spoken on my own, but the Father himself who sent me has given me a command to say everything I have said.**”

- Likewise, Jesus told His followers in **Mark 13:9-11** that the **Holy Spirit** will give us the

**words to speak** during times of **interrogation** before hostile people.

Suffering for Christ causes you to **rely** on the HOLY SPIRIT for **wisdom** and **strength**.

- Suffering for Christ enables you to **experience God's Spirit** on a deeper level than before.

### **Respond to Suffering For Christ with Rejoicing**

How do YOU make it through suffering for Christ?

- **KEY:** Make sure you are **SUFFERING** for the **RIGHT REASON!**

**WARNING:** **1 Peter 4:15** **Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a meddler.**

I think **verse 15** is pretty **explanatory**.

- Over and over in this letter Peter wants to make sure that no Christian suffers for anything other than the cause of Christ.
  - Why is this so important? Because it **hurts the testimony of Christ!**
- It is **hard to make an impact** on others when you—or even those you are associated with—are being punished as **“murders or thieves.”**

Notice, however, that the last one on Peter's list are pretty broad: "meddlers."

- We may not have such a problem with the first three, but many Christians have a problem with the last one!
  - They want to be in the middle of everyone's business!

Take a **stand**, but don't go **looking** for a fight!

Peter's point is that if you are going to suffer for anything, make sure it is for the cause of Christ.

## **Respond to Suffering For Christ with Rejoicing** HOW?

**1 Peter 4:16** "But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in having that name."

I am sure that **Peter's** felt a **sharp pain** in his heart as he penned these words: "if anyone suffers as a **Christian, let him not be ashamed.**"

- No doubt he **thought back** to that time when he was **ridiculed** by the **servant girl** and the crowd in the **courtyard** of the **High Priest** about his **relationship** to Jesus Christ who was on trial.

- I am sure that Peter **recalled his shame** at denying his relationship with Christ.
- I am sure that Peter recalled with **regret** the **words of denial** that he spoke that fateful night.
- I am sure that Peter **remembered** that **rooster crow** as if it were yesterday.
  - I am sure that **Peter remembered** the **shame** of that night.

IF you are going to suffer, **it is better to suffer for being a follower of Christ than anything else!**

- In fact, you should **“Glorify God”** that you get to suffer for Him!

How do you **glorify God** when you are suffering for being a Christian?

- Peter says you should **“Glorify God in having that name.”**
  - Praise God that you are **“chosen”!**

Remember, what Peter wrote in **1 Peter 2:9-10** **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people;**

you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

## **Respond to Suffering For Christ with Rejoicing**

Peter states in **1 Peter 4:17**: “For the time has come for judgment to begin with God’s household, and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who disobey the gospel of God?”

For the UNBELIEVER: This earth is as close to HEAVEN he/she will ever be.

- For the UNBELIEVER: NOW is their time of **glory**; and their **suffering** comes in **eternity**.

For the BELIEVER: This earth is as close to HELL he/she will ever be.

- For the BELIEVER: NOW is OUR time of **suffering**; and our **glory** comes in **eternity** and will last for eternity.

It is so easy to look around at the people who **live** according to the **world’s ideas** and their **sinful desires** and become **envious** of **them**.

- It seems like they are having such a good time—and they are!!

- Even as Christians we are tempted to think “So what if they compromise, if they are having a good time isn’t that what really matters?”

It is true that many who do not know Christ,

- do not go to church,
- do not tithe, and d
- do not care about God
  - HAVE beautiful homes, nice cars, all the pleasures of life and they seemingly have life all figured out.
    - However, they are missing one very important fact—**life is temporary and eternity is not!**

For the UNBELIEVER, this is heaven!

But what kind of heaven is this?

They may have experienced much of what life has to offer in the way of **pleasure**, but can you really call this heaven?

- It is not much of a **heaven** to me when you get **sick**.
- It is not much of a **heaven** when you **die** and **leave all** that you achieved **behind**.

- It is not much of a **heaven** when people **take advantage** of you.
- It is not much of a **heaven** when you must **deal** with the **everyday imperfections** of life—  
**power outages, slow computers, mistakes, etc.**

All the **money, experiences** and **pleasures** this world has to offer are all **tainted with imperfections**.

In these verses you have **two groups** of **people** who **ARE** or **WILL** experience suffering.

- The first group is the church or the “**household of God**” and
- The second group is the unsaved or the “**godless**” people.

What does Peter mean when he wrote: **1 Peter 4:17a**  
“**For the time has come for judgment to begin with God’s household...?**”

**God** often **allows suffering** to come upon the **church** to **mature** it.

- **In addition, God sometimes sends suffering upon believers to discipline them.**
  - In **v. 17** that seems to be Peter’s angle—God sending judgment upon His children for **disciplinary** reasons.

- God often allows suffering in our lives for the **purpose** of **purifying** us.

No doubt, suffering is not easy—it is **difficult**. **Suffering is suffering** and it is difficult to endure just as much for the Christian as anyone else.

- That is why Peter quotes **Prov. 11:31** in **1 Peter 4:18**: **And if a righteous person is saved with difficulty, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”**

What is Peter saying?

- Peter is saying is **if it was necessary for God to purify the lives of *saints* by persecution and suffering, what can one say as to the position of the *unsaved* in relation to God?**<sup>2</sup>

In other words, if God is allowing **hostility** and **persecution** to come upon the church now, then **what** will happen when He sends **judgment** upon the **unsaved**.

- The answer is obvious: UNBELIEVERS have **no hope**. No chance.
  - The Bible makes it clear that after death there is no second chance.

---

<sup>2</sup>Wuest, K. S. 1997, c1984. *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (1 Pe 4:18). Eerdmans: Grand Rapids

IF you are suffering 1) Make sure you are suffering for the right reason—for Christ and not for sin, 2) if you are suffering allow God to mature you through it.

## **Respond to Suffering For Christ with Rejoicing**

HOW do you allow God to MATURE you in Suffering?

**1 Peter 4:19** “So then, let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good.”

*YOU allow GOD to MATURE you in suffering by “Entrusting Yourself” to God!*

Remember, God is your Faithful Creator—depend up HIM; hold on to Him!

Less than a week before **Martin Burnham's** abduction by **Muslim guerrillas** on the **Philippine island of Palawan** in **May 2001**, the *New Tribes missionary* gave the devotional at a Wednesday evening service at Rose Hill Bible Church in his small hometown outside Wichita, Kansas.

- Some of Burnham's **last words in the United States** were also the last words of Jesus recorded in the **Gospel of John**, said Ralph Burnham, Martin's uncle, during yesterday morning's

service at the church. "His very last words were, 'Follow thou me,'" Ralph Burnham said, his voice choking up. "Martin not only spoke of following Christ, but he took on that responsibility. Of course, at that time neither he nor any of us expected how far he was going to be required to go to. But he was willing to go." Martin Burnham, 42, kept that attitude throughout the **376 days** he and his wife, **Gracia**, 43, were held captive by the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group.

- Just before a **Philippine military raid** on the **kidnappers** that led to **Martin's death** and **Gracia's freedom**, the two huddled together in a **hammock** under a makeshift tent.

"Martin and Gracia had really been thinking that there would be a chance that they would not make it out alive," said Martin's brother, Doug, relying on a phone conversation with Gracia.

"Martin said to Gracia, 'The Bible says to serve the Lord with gladness. Let's go out all the way. Let's serve him all the way with gladness.'"

- The two then **prayed** in their **hammock**, **recited Scripture verses** to each other, and sang.
  - They laid down to rest.

- Then the rescue assault began and bullets began to fly, puncturing Gracia's leg and Martin's chest.
  - Martin died and Gracia survived

They both suffered, but they “entrusted themselves” to God in the midst of their suffering!

### Remember, God is your Faithful Creator!

- Like Martin and Gracia, “Entrust yourself to your Faithful Creator”
  - **Trust God** in the midst of suffering
  - **Keep focused** on Christ
  - Enjoy the **benefit** of the “**Fellowship of Christ’s suffering**”
  - Enjoy the **increased presence** of the **Holy Spirit**.

## WE

### **PQ: How are you going to suffer?**

IF you suffer, is it going to be a result of something YOU brought on by....

- Doing evil
- Stealing
- Meddling
- Murder

Those are all the result of NOT living out WHO you are!

**PQ: How are you going to suffer?**

- Are you going to suffer “as a Christian”?
- Are you going to suffer because of your testimony for Christ?

**PQ: How are you going to suffer?**

- Are you going to suffer in anger toward God?
- Are you going to suffer for Christ as a “Blessing”?
- Are you going to suffer for Christ in shame?
- Are you going to suffer for Christ focused on the future that is awaiting you?
- Are you going to suffer for Christ knowing that God can/will use suffering as a way to draw you closer to Him?
- Are you going to suffer for Christ knowing that God can/will use suffering as a way to purify you?

**PQ: How are you going to suffer?**