

Our Stewardship of Suffering

1 Peter 4:12-19

PART ONE

Introduction

The Theme of this epistle: *How to live as a Christian in response to trials, persecution, and suffering.*

Christians have been given a *Stewardship of our Suffering.*

Four Instructions on how to exercise responsible stewardship of trials and suffering:

1. *Expectation of Suffering* (v12)
2. *Exultation in Suffering* (vv13-14)
3. *Examination & Exoneration in Suffering* (vv15-18)
4. *Exemplification in Suffering* (v19)

I. Expectation of Suffering (v12)

“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” (v12).

Expect suffering. If you are a Christian, persecution is inevitable. The Bible says so.

“Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking” (1 Peter 4:1).

Jesus said quite plainly: “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20).

The key to enduring trials and suffering is by resolving to think rightly about God’s purpose in them.

The fact that Christians are intimately in *union* with Christ means that they will necessarily share the sufferings of His reproach.

“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).

“Scars are the price which *every* believer pays for his loyalty to Christ. They are also his *credentials* before God” (Hendriksen).

“From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus” (Galatians 6:17).

“For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10).

The more devoted you are to living for Christ; the more difficult life becomes. The choice is yours.

“I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (John 17:14).

“Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake” (Matthew 10:21-22).

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another” (Matthew 24:9-10).

“sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away” (Matthew 13:20-21).

Why would they *hate* us?

Our beliefs, words, and actions arouse the contempt they have for God and His Son.

That the world will hate us and persecute us should be no surprise to true Christians.

“Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you” (1 John 3:13).

“that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know” (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4).

“Beloved” Peter’s tender, caring way of reminding them that they are loved – by him and by God.

“fiery trial” = a burning ordeal; a furnace used to in the smelting process to remove impure elements.

“to test you”

Six Common Reasons why God brings *fiery trials* to His children:

1. God brings the fiery trial to reveal and *test* the contents of the heart (the essence of the real person).

“The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts” (Proverbs 17:3).

“For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried” (Psalm 66:10).

2. God brings the fiery trial to expose your heart in order to test you and *humble* you.

“And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not” (Deuteronomy 8:2).

3. God brings the fiery trial in order to *purify* you.

“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction” (Isaiah 48:10).

“But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold” (Job 23:10).

4. God brings the fiery trial to test the genuineness of your *faith*.

“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6-7).

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4).

5. God brings the fiery trial to challenge our *love* for Him.

“For the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

6. God uses the fiery trial as His *winnowing fork*—to determine who really belongs to Him.

“And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The Lord is my God'" (Zechariah 13:9).

“But Ittai answered the king, ‘As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be’” (2 Samuel 15:21).

Before He went to the cross, Jesus assured us “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).