

# Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

An Expositional Journey Through **1Peter**

**1Peter 4:12-19**

46 Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal, Part 2

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March 24, 2019

**1 Peter 4:12-19**

**12** Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

**13** but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

**14** If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

**15** Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

**16** but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

**17** For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

**18** *AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?*

**19** Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

To the Glory of God

Paul Brand was the man that God used to treat Leprosy in India for many years. He developed a surgical technique that allowed children, suffering with Leprosy, to use their hands and feet. And in a 1994 magazine article entitled, “*And God Created Pain*”, Dr. Brand said:

“I have come to see that pain and pleasure come to us not as opposites but as Siamese twins, strangely joined and intertwined. Nearly all my memories of acute happiness, in fact, involve some element of pain or struggle.”<sup>1</sup>

And even though we are constantly being indoctrinated by many humanistic voices that tell us that “Happiness” is the result of being “self-centered” and building up our own “self-esteem”, it is very hard to find *anyone* who says:

“The deepest and rarest and most satisfying joys of my life have come in times of extended ease and earthly comfort.”

But you see, *nobody* says that, because it isn't true. But what *is* true is what the Puritan, Samuel Rutherford, said when he was put in what he called “the Cellars of Affliction”:

“The Great King keeps his wine there — not in the courtyard where the sun shines.”

And what *is* true is what Charles Spurgeon said:

“They who dive in the Sea of Affliction bring up rare pearls.”

... and what *is* true is what the Apostle Peter said:

**but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.**

... and so, we should look at the Epistle of **1 Peter** as a “handbook” that will help us develop a “Biblical Theology about Suffering”. And one of the amazing things that Peter teaches about Suffering is that we should *not* just “grit our teeth” and “hang on”. Peter doesn't teach that we are to merely “endure” our Suffering, but that, like everything else we do, we should suffer “to God's Glory”; and...

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1994/january10/and-god-created-pain.html>

... keep on rejoicing ...

... and we are to keep on rejoicing ...

... so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation

Peter teaches us to *know*, and *believe*, and *trust*, that *as we burn*, we are... **“blessed”**! So, the *first* thing we need to believe, if we are to possess a “Biblical Theology of Suffering”, is that our Suffering is *not* some random, disconnected event that has no Eternal Purpose or Meaning. Our Suffering is *not* a sign that God is angry with us, or that we have failed God, or that we don’t have enough Faith. But rather, our Suffering is a wondrous Tool, in the Hands of a God (Who loves us more than we can imagine), Who is determined to share His Own Personal Holiness with us. Please consider **Hebrews 12:4-6** that says:

**You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."**

Now the writer of **Hebrews** wrote this Epistle within three years of the Apostle Peter’s Letter. So, they were familiar with each other. And here, the writer quotes from three different Old Testament sources here to teach us how we are to view Suffering. First, he quotes from **Job 5:17**, that says:

**Behold, how happy is the man whom God reprove, So do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.**

... and then he quotes from **Proverbs 3:11&12**, that says:

**My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord Or loathe His reproof, For whom the Lord loves He reprove, Even as a father *corrects* the son in whom he delights.**

... and then he quotes from **Psalms 119:75**, that says:

**I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.**

So, for us to develop a correct, Biblical Theology about Suffering, we must incorporate *all* that the Scriptures teach about this amazing subject. And so, we must recognize that, even in our Trial, God is Sovereign! And that means that, even though satan is attacking us, we are actually being “tested” by God. Here is what Peter said:

**1 Peter 4:12a**

**Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing...**

... and last time, we learned that it is our “Faith” that is being “tested”. Jesus told this very same Peter back in **Luke 22:31&32**:

**Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.**

... so, even though satan is very angry and is *demanding* to “sift us like wheat”, Jesus is always faithfully *interceding* for us at the “Right Hand of the Majesty on High” (**Romans 8:26, 27, &34**), so that two things will happen in, by, and through this “testing”:

1. Our Faith will not fail
2. We will be prepared for Ministry

... which tells us that God is the One Who is firmly in control of our Suffering. But what is the main Goal in the testing of our Faith through the fiery ordeal of Suffering? Peter tells us:

**1 Peter 4:13b**

**... to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation**

... and this tells us that God's Goal in our Suffering is *not* that we fail or fall apart. But it also is not that we merely survive, either. No, Peter teaches here that we are to ...

### **... keep on rejoicing...**

Now how is this possible? By definition, Suffering is not pleasant. Suffering hurts. And when we hurt, we don't always act like everything is okay. And I don't think God wants us to act like Gnostics and simply try to *ignore* the pain or act like we aren't hurting. Refusing to acknowledge that we are hurting is not exercising Faith. It is simply ignoring the obvious.

Suffering is *never* easy, and it isn't something that *anybody* would ever *volunteer* for. Most people spend a good deal of their time doing everything in their power to *avoid* Suffering. In fact, most people, even in Church, see Suffering as some sort of *failure* on our part that we have either failed God miserably or we simply don't have enough Faith to be delivered from our burning.

So, why does Peter tell us to "keep on rejoicing" here when Suffering causes everything *but* "rejoicing"? Is Peter teaching "Stoicism" here? Is this about "squaring our jaw" and "toughing it out"? Are we to merely "outlast" the Suffering or *endure* it? *Why* is Peter commanding us to do something that we simply cannot do in our own power or strength?

This is where we need to understand a very important "Spiritual Principle". The Bible teaches that with every Commandment of God we are told to obey, there is a wonderful Benefit promised to those who *do* obey. And the Promised Benefit always comes *before* the Trial. And so, the Promise of God acts as the "Divine Incentive" for us to go through whatever we are faced with. For example, in **Exodus 20:12a**, God commanded all of Humanity:

### **Honor your father and your mother...**

And most of the time this is read, we *interpret* it as saying, "Obey your Father and Mother". And we usually pair this with the New Testament Command:

**Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. (Colossians 3:20)**

... so, then we teach children to *obey* their mothers and fathers, which is wonderful. But the Command of God was to “honor” our parents, not to merely “obey” them. And that involves much *more* than doing what they tell us when we are young children living under their roof. The word “honor” comes from a Hebrew word that *literally* means, “*to bear the weight of respecting another, or to carry the burden of glorifying someone else, or to endure the weight of enjoying another, and to hold up the load of magnifying someone else*”. So, this word is not *flighty* or *silly*. It isn't *frivolous* or *surface*. This word is *weighty*, and carries the sense of something that is both very *serious*, and yet, very *wonderful*; something that is *intense* and, yet, *joyful*. It is the very *same* word that Moses used when he quoted God in **Exodus 14:17&18**:

**As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen.**

... so, just how was God going to be “honored” through Pharaoh and all his army? By *destroying* them. So, this isn't silly or frivolous. This is *weighty* and *serious*. God parted the Red Sea so that Moses and the children of Israel could pass over on dry land. All night long, a strong east wind blew, and God stood hundreds of millions of gallons of water of the Red Sea up on either side like two walls. But as the army of Pharaoh followed Moses to slaughter three million Jews, God collapsed the weight of water onto the chariots and they were crushed under 8.34 pounds per gallon! And so, God destroyed the mightiest standing army on earth at that time, and to this day Egypt has never recovered.

So, God's Justice was “honored” through the *seriousness* and the *weightiness* and the *burden* of hardening Pharaoh's heart ,and by *decimating* an entire military. And to this day Egypt and all who read the Old Testament:

**... know that I am the Lord, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen.**

But that destruction also brought about great joy and great rejoicing and great celebration. As the Evil that was in Pharaoh was destroyed by the Glory of God's righteous Justice, the Glory of God's Mercy and Grace toward the Jews could shine forth. So, *honoring* God is just another way of *glorifying* God.

And so, "honoring" our parents is us *bearing the burden of glorifying them*. It is us *carrying the weight of respecting them*. And it is us *embracing the seriousness of enjoying them*. So, this is going to require a whole lot *more* from us than simply "obeying" them when we are young and living with them. In fact, I would suggest that this "honoring" really doesn't even *begin* to happen until we are grown and they are older. And it will involve us doing what is hard so that the "glory" and "dignity" and "respect" of our parents is not overthrown in their last days through neglect or by other evil people.

And the argument we hear today is, "*But this is too hard*", or "*This is going to interrupt my plans*", or "*This will require me to sacrifice*". Some even think they are *exempt* from this Command because their parents are not godly people. And yet, you would be hard pressed to find that exemption anywhere in the Bible.

The point that people miss is that this is *not* optional. This is a Commandment from the Owner and Creator of the Universe. And it has to do with "respecting" and "honoring" Life, and about "honoring" those who gave us the Gift of Life. And by sacrificing and by doing what is inconvenient and hard, we are displaying the inherent Value and Worth of our parents. And this glorifies God. And it is also about not allowing the aged and the weak and the sick and the poor to be thrown aside.

The point I am making is that obeying this Command will require much from us. So, what is the "Divine Incentive" for us to actually do what we are going to have to *sacrifice* in order to obey this Commandment?

### **Exodus 20:12b**

**... that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.**

... and in **Matthew 15:3-9**, Jesus said:

**Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,' and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.' But you say, 'Whoever says to *his* father or mother, "Whatever I have that would help you has been given *to God*," he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And *by this* you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: **THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.****

... and the Apostle Paul said:

### **Ephesians 6:2&3**

**HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.**

So, to be "Biblical" here. we are **NOT** to obey the Command to "Honor our Mother and Father" simply because we are *supposed* to, or because it is our *duty* to do so, or even because God told us to. No, "being Biblical" means we are to trust in the Promise of God, and we are to look *forward* to *inheriting* the Promise which acts as a "Divine Incentive" and which produces the strength that we need to obey. And the same thing is true about Suffering.

What does the Bible teach as to the Reason *why* Jesus obeyed His Father's Will to die on the Cross? Was it because God told Him to? No. Was it because Jesus was *obligated* to obey? No. Was it because He was *supposed* to? No. Was it because He loved *us* that much? No. Why did Jesus remain on the Cross, even though He had the Power to come down?

### **Hebrews 12:1&2**

**Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him**



**endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

Yes, God the Father told Jesus to die on the Cross. Yes, He was "supposed to". Yes, it was His "Duty" to do so. And yes, Jesus loved us that much. But the main Reason Jesus remained on the Cross, the "Divine Incentive" that was promised to Jesus *before* God told Him to die, the overriding Benefit that Jesus was looking forward to that gave Him the Power to endure the Suffering was:

**... the Joy set before Him...**

... the unbelievable, unspeakable, glorious, and everlasting Delight that Jesus was going to possess forever *after* He obeyed His Father! *That* is the Promise that Jesus trusted in, and that gave Him the Power and Strength and Incentive to suffer the humiliating and horrendous and unjust Death on the Cross!

And so, *why* did Peter tell us to "keep on rejoicing" when we are suffering? Because we're *supposed* to? No. Because we're *tough*? No. Because we have an elevated sense of Duty and are able to summons our own self-discipline to obey whatever God commands? No. What is the Promise? What is the "Divine Incentive"?

**... so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation...you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.**

... which I would suggest is the very *same* Promise that Jesus trusted in, and which *could* be expressed like this:

**Psalm 16:11**

**In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.**

...or like this:

**John 15:11**

**These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.**

... which is simply another way of understanding what the writer of **Hebrews** meant when he said:

**He [God] *disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.***

... and then he states the obvious:

**All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (Hebrews 12:11)**

... and then the writer of **Hebrews** gives us the *conclusion* of the matter:

**Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. (Hebrews 12:12&13)**

... which is very *similar* to what Peter teaches...

**... so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation...you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.**

So, we are *not* to get weak when we are suffering, we are *not* to turn to sin, or argue with God, or complain about our lot. We are to believe and trust that God is doing a wondrous Work in our lives. And we are to believe and trust that the *results*, of being tested and transformed, in the fires of Sanctification will far *outweigh* the pain. Which is *exactly* what the Apostle Paul taught in **Romans 8:16-18**:

**The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

... which is *similar* to what Peter himself taught...

## 1 Peter 5:10

**After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.**

But then the writer of **Hebrews** gives yet another Command that contains a sober warning:

**Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that *there be* no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single* meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears. (Hebrews 12:14-17)**

Now this was not spoken in a vacuum. The writer of **Hebrews** was *not* simply talking here about “coming short of the Grace of God”, or a “root of bitterness”, or about somebody being “immoral” or “godless” and losing out with God. He is talking, very *specifically*, about a “root of bitterness springing up” in those who are being disciplined by God in the fires of Suffering. He is talking about people “coming short of the Grace of God” as they are being sanctified. He is talking about people turning to sin and away from God as they burn, he is talking about people being deceived that “selling your birthright” and “leaving the family” will work out better for you than suffering with the people of God.

What Peter and the other Bible-writers teach us about Suffering is that we are to rejoice *in* the Suffering! And we are not to rejoice because we are gluttons for punishment, or because we have the ability to “psyche ourselves up”. No, several things happen when genuine believers suffer:

- We are drawn *closer* to Jesus.
- We are much more godly Christians.
- We bear more fruit.
- We are much more effective witnesses.

... all *because we burn* not by the *absence* of our testing.

But when genuine believers suffer “as a Christian”, we also prove the Worth and the Value of the Christ for Whom we suffer. Why would anyone believe our testimony that, “*I love Jesus with all my heart*”, or “*Jesus is the most important Person in my life*”, if I fall away when I suffer for His Cause?

A Biblical Theology of Suffering teaches us that we are better off *because* of our Trials. We see Jesus more clearly, and we love Him more deeply, and we pursue Him more fervently *because* we have been tested. So, we are *not* better off *avoiding* Suffering or thinking we can do something (exercise faith) to escape it. But a Biblical Theology of Suffering also teaches us that we display what we *really* think about Jesus when we “suffer in His Name”.

When Bernie May was the head of *Wycliffe Bible Translators* (1980-1992), he visited a young missionary family who were laboring in an unspecified Muslim nation<sup>2</sup>. They had been there three years working with a “people group” of one hundred thousand people and no knowledge of Jesus Christ. This couple had three children under five-years old. Bernie gave his report:

“Their baby was covered with pox marks, some of which looked infected. I asked if the child had chicken pox. ‘No, those are ant bites,’ the mother said. ‘We can’t keep the ants off him. Eventually, he will become immune to them.’

In a moment of honesty, she confessed she felt guilty because she was suffering from stress. Stress! She and her young husband came there from mid-USA. Now they live in a place where the temperature is above 100 degrees most of the year. Their children are covered with bites; a war is going on close by; their helpers are in danger for being their friends; many in the villages are suffering from hunger and disease; and they can’t even let their supporters know what they are doing so that they can pray for them since they are in a ‘critical’ area, and she felt guilty because she is under stress.

I told her she had every right to feel stressful. I had only been there three days and I was already beginning to come unglued. Yet this dedicated young couple were laughing and joking and filled with the Joy of the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> It is common for Missionaries to never reveal the nation in which they labor. The Governments of those nations would seek them out to arrest or kill them- if they knew.

<sup>3</sup> <https://shop.wycliffe.org/products/learning-to-trust-may?variant=4525750723>

**1 Peter** is a Letter from an Apostle that was orchestrated by God the Holy Spirit to teach us how to develop a Biblical Theology of Suffering and be like that. In fact, the Passage that Brother Andy read to us *commands* us to be like that. And it gives us at least six Reasons why we *should* be like that, and *can* be. The Divine Command is found in verse 13:

**... to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing**

So, developing a Biblical Theology of Suffering causes us to understand that when we are thrown in the "Cellars of Suffering", we are to "keep on rejoicing". When we dive in the "Sea of Affliction", "keep on rejoicing". In fact, keep on rejoicing not in *spite* of the Affliction, but *because* of it. And again, this is not some psychological manipulation from the "power of positive thinking". This is an utterly *radical, abnormal, supernatural* way to respond to Suffering. And it is *not* in our power to do so. And it is also *not* for the sake of our own honor. This is the way "Spiritual Aliens" and "Exiles" live on the earth for the Glory of the great King. The Command that James gave when he said:

**Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials (James 1:2).**

... would be very *foolish* advice except for one thing, God. So, today I want to concentrate on the six reasons that Peter gives us in this Passage that allows us to "keep on rejoicing" when the Suffering comes. And they all relate to God.

## **1. Not a Surprise but a Plan**

Believers can "keep on rejoicing" because the Suffering we experience is *not* a Surprise, but a specially designed Plan of God, just for us. Verse 12:

**Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;**

Our Suffering isn't strange. It isn't absurd. And it isn't meaningless. It is very purposeful. Peter says here it is for your "testing". Look again at verse 19:

**"Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.**

... so, Suffering is *not* some odd anomaly outside of the Will of God. It is *part* of God's Will for our lives. And this is true even when satan may be the *immediate* Cause. So, God is absolutely Sovereign over everything, all the time, *including* our Suffering. Even *including* satan. But, why? For what Purpose? Compare verses 12 and 17.

Verse 12: **your "fiery ordeal" comes "for your testing."**

Verse 17: **For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?**

The point here is that God's Judgment is moving through the earth, all the time. God never sleeps, He never rests, and He never stops. God is constantly "pushing and pulling", "raising up and casting down", and He is ever "building and upending what is built", so that His perfect Will is always carried out exactly as He has spoken, and that all of those He has chosen to save will come to Salvation.

Right this minute, God is answering all of the collective prayers (that is in accord with His Will) of all of God's people, who have ever lived, that have ever been prayed. And He is answering those prayers in such a way that His Will is *never* thwarted and His Purposes are *never* diminished! And *part* of His Will and Purpose is that God doesn't simply "forgive" His elect. The Bible teaches that God:

**... chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. (Ephesians 1:4)**

... so, God is very busy, right this minute, sovereignly "causing and allowing" *whatever He needs to*, so that every one of those, who have been washed in the Blood of Jesus and have been forgiven, will *also* be made to be "holy" and "blameless" (sanctified)!

And that means that when the Fire of Judgment burns the Church, it is *not* a *destroying* Fire, it is a *testing, proving, and purifying* Fire. When God's Fire burns the world, it either *awakens* or *destroys*.  
Verse 18:

***AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED,  
WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?***

Believers pass through the *testing* Fire of God's Discipline because He loves us and *wills* our Purity. The various imperfections that reside in us *hinders* us from experiencing the *full* measure of Joy and Satisfaction in God. And so, because God wants us to have this limitless Delight in Him, God *despises* those imperfections and is determined to remove them. So, because of His great love for His forgiven children, God will spare us no pain- to rid us of what He hates.

So, the reason that Suffering is not surprising is because it is planned. It is a preplanned Test designed just for us, *individually*. It is a *purifying* Fire that will reveal and strengthen *real* Faith by consuming "performance faith."<sup>4</sup>

The Russian novelist and historian, Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008), had long been impressed with the humility and patience of Russian believers. One night in prison in Siberia, Boris Kornfeld, a Jewish doctor, sat up with Solzhenitsyn and told him the story of his conversion to Christ. The same night Kornfeld was clubbed to death. Solzhenitsyn said that Kornfeld's last words were:

"It was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of Faith in Jesus. Bless you, prison, for having been used to bring to me my Savior".<sup>5</sup>

God the Holy Spirit uses the accounts of the horrific Suffering of God's people to bring Humility and Conviction, even Salvation, to those who witness it, or who simply read about it. Therefore, we have strong Hope that the Sufferings of our own day will not only be used by God to

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<sup>4</sup> "Performance Faith" is that which only acts to benefit us rather than perfect a love for and a joy in Jesus Christ. So, for example, "Performance Faith" would always seek physical healing and financial blessings, rather than being transformed into a more godly individual who displays the Worth and Value of Jesus through our Suffering.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Solzhenitsyn; *The Gulag Archipelago*; 1973; page 266

make *us* holy, but they will also be used to bring Purity and Life to others. Suffering is not *surprising*, it is *purposeful*.

## 2. Evidence of Union with Christ

We are to “keep on rejoicing” because our Suffering “as a Christian” is an Evidence of our “Union with Christ”. Verse 13a:

**but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing**

In other words, our Sufferings are *not* merely “our own”. They are also Christ’s. And this is Cause for rejoicing because it means we are united to Christ. Joseph Tson, a Romanian Pastor, who stood up to the Communist repressions of Christianity during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, wrote:

“Suffering is not outside the Will of God. It *is* the Will of God. This ‘Union with Christ’ is the most beautiful Subject in the Christian life. It means that I am not a lone fighter here: I am an *extension* of Jesus Christ. When I was beaten in Romania, He suffered in my body. It is not *my* Suffering: I only had the honor to share His Sufferings.”<sup>6</sup>

Keep on rejoicing, because our Sufferings “as a Christian” are *not* merely ours, but Christ’s. And they give *irrefutable* Evidence of our “Union with Jesus”.

## 3. A Means to Attaining Greater Joy in Glory

“Keep on rejoicing” because this Joy will strengthen your Assurance that when Christ comes in Glory, you will rejoice forever with Him. Verse 13b:

**“[As you share the Sufferings of Christ] keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation**

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<sup>6</sup> Craig Hovey; *To Share in the Body: A Theology of Martyrdom for Today's Church*; 2008; page 117



In other words, there is a "Rejoicing" that we will experience when Jesus comes back that we simply *cannot* experience now. The "Rejoicing" that we will experience when Jesus returns is much *deeper* and more *exhilarating* than the Rejoicing anything we have now. So, Peter tells us to "keep on rejoicing", *now*, so that we may "rejoice *even better*" *then*. Another way of understanding this is to say that the Joy we have now (through our Suffering) is the *means* of attaining the *fullness* of Joy, then a *thousand-fold* in Glory!

In the Bible, Suffering comes *first*, and then, Glory follows.

**...the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. (1 Peter 1:11b)**

Paul said:

**... we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. (Romans 8:17b)**

... so, *first* comes the Suffering, and *then* the Glory, both for Jesus and for those who are united to Him.

But if we become embittered at what God has allowed to come to us, or we become worldly, or we no longer value our birthright, or we buy into the lie that those out in the world have a better time than we do, we are not preparing to rejoice in fullness at Christ's Return. So, Peter tells us to "keep on rejoicing now in suffering" in order that we might rejoice with exultation at the Revelation of His Glory.

#### **4. The Spirit of Glory and of God Rests on You**

Keep on rejoicing in Suffering, because the "Spirit of Glory", which is the "Spirit of God", rests upon you. Verse 14:

**If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.**

This means that in the hour of greatest Trial there is a great Consolation. In great Suffering on earth there is great Support from Heaven. You may think now that you will not be able to bear it. But if

you are Christ's, you will be able to bear it, because God the Spirit, Who is the Spirit of Glory, will come to you and rest upon you. As Samuel Rutherford said:

... *the Great King keeps his finest wine in the cellar of affliction.*

God does not bring this Wine out to serve with chips on sunny afternoons. He keeps it for extremities. So, seek to be holy, *especially* while we burn, seek to love Truth *in* our Trial, seek to bear a true witness when the Afflictions come, and do not turn aside from "godly Risk"<sup>7</sup>, even though you may lose all you have in this life. And the Promise from a God, Who cannot lie, is you will experience the "Spirit of Glory" resting upon you in your Suffering.

## 5. Glorifying God

Keep on rejoicing in Suffering because this glorifies God. Verse 16:

**but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.**

Glorifying God means showing, by your actions and attitudes, that you really believe that Jesus is the Treasure of the Universe. But we must understand that Jesus *is* the supreme Value of all that has been created. And our Suffering does not make that to be true. He is that whether we believe it or not. But suffering like this *proves* (to yourself and others) that you believe that Jesus is valuable, desirable, and all-satisfying.

So, the *greatest* way for any of us to display the infinite *preciousness* of Jesus is *not* with our words, or even by avoiding pain, but by *continuing to rejoice* when all other supports for our Satisfaction are falling away. When believers "keep rejoicing in God" in the midst of unjust and even horrific Suffering, it shows that God, and not anything else, is the great Source of our Joy.

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<sup>7</sup> "Godly Risk" is when we do not hold back anything in pursuit of God's Will and Word. Godly Risk should be understood in contrast with other forms of risk that have nothing to do with God or His Glory

I mentioned Paul Brand earlier, the missionary surgeon to India. He tells the story of his mother, who was also a missionary in India, and who did something that symbolizes a life devoted through Suffering to the Glory of God and not self. Dr. Brand writes:

“For Mother, pain was a frequent companion, as was sacrifice. I say it kindly and in love, but in her old age, Mother had little of physical beauty left in her. The rugged conditions, combined with the crippling falls and her battles with typhoid, dysentery, and malaria, had made her a thin, hunched-over old woman. Years of exposure to wind and sun had toughened her facial skin into leather and furrowed it with wrinkles as deep and extensive as any I have seen on a human face. Mother knew that as well as anyone- for the last 20 years of her life, she refused to keep a mirror in her house.”<sup>8</sup>

Twenty years of Ministry without a mirror! But she didn't need one. God was both her Light and Glory while she was simply the mirror of His Light. Dear friends, we must understand that our Joy now, through whatever Suffering God has allowed, is the *means* of attaining the *fullness* of Joy later in Glory.

## 6. God's Faithfulness to Care for Your Soul

Finally, “keep on rejoicing” because your Creator is faithful to care for your soul. Verse 19:

**Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.**

The *degrees* of Suffering and the *forms* of Affliction will differ for every one of us. But one thing we will all have in common till Jesus comes: we will all die. We will come to that awesome moment of Reckoning. And if you have time, you will see your whole life played before you as you ponder if it has been well-spent. And you will tremble at the unspeakable Reality that in just moments you will face God. And the destiny of your soul will be irrevocable.

Will you rejoice in that hour? You will, if you entrust your soul to a faithful Creator. He created your soul for His Glory. And He is faithful

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1994/january10/and-god-created-pain.html>

to that Glory, and to all who love it and who live for it. So, now is the time to show where your Treasure really is. Now is the time to shine with the Glory of God. Trust Him. And “keep on rejoicing”!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.