

The Right Response to Suffering

1Peter 4:12-19

We have come to the last section of our study in 1Peter which began in chapter 4 and verse 7. The first part of v.7 reads... *The end of all things is at hand*. This kicked off for us a FOUR-PART series we entitled "Living with the End in Mind". We are at the END with Jesus our Lord coming at any moment. Peter wrote this 30 years after the Lord Jesus ascended back to Heaven. Now it's been over 2000 years and how much more can we truly say... **The End of All things is at hand.**

Since that is true, we should be ever so diligent to walk faithfully for our Lord. Last time, we looked at vv.7-11 and spoke of Our Relationship with the Saints and how we must pray for one another; love one another; serve one another; worship with one another as we seek to glorify God.

Today, we come to v.12-19 speaking on this subject of **Rightly Responding to Suffering**. Suffering comes in all shapes and sizes. Peter is more specific in the kind of suffering he speaks of. It's persecution from an unbelieving world. How do we deal with this? As there is a right way to relate with the saints, there is a right way to relate with the unbelieving world. Especially when they become hostile toward the gospel message; and make verbal and physical assaults toward Christians who proclaim its message.

How do we rightly respond to suffering that comes from an unbelieving world?

Think of it like this..... as a follower of Christ you are paddling in a canoe going a different direction. The world is going downstream, but the Christian is going upstream. Going against the flow. To help us, we have SOME THOUGHTS FROM THE TEXT TO HELP US AS WE --

1. Don't be surprised (v.12)

The Christians who first received this letter from Peter no doubt were surprised when they told their friends, family, and neighbors how they came to become a follower of Jesus Christ.

You're going the wrong way, I'm sure is what they heard. You're paddling upstream, but the world in droves are paddling down stream having a good time.

The hostility they received was so intense they had to flee for their lives. We learned this from chapter 1:1. They were called exiles, aliens, strangers, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Persecution swept across the Roman world causing Christians to relocate. We read in ACTS 8:1 how the Believers because of persecution "*were SCATTERED throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.*" Warren Wiersbe said, God's people are not God's "sheltered" people, but they are God's scattered people. To get more detail of the persecution of the EARLY CHURCH, read the Book of Acts.

You read of Stephen who was not able to finish his sermon because he was stoned to death.

You read of King Herod who had James the brother of John killed by the sword, and was aiming to do the same with Peter, but an angel released Peter from jail. Interesting reading in Acts 12.

Peter was spared death because God had a job for him to do. He was the main apostle there in Jerusalem and God through divine inspiration gave him the letter of 1 Peter and 2 Peter.

DON'T BE SURPRISED (Peter writes) at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

- A. Don't be surprised - "**when it comes upon you**" not "if it comes" it's only a matter of "when". Don't be surprised....this is a normal reaction from an unbelieving world. The first 300 years of church history was a time of great persecution. However, it's been said the last 50 years more persecution, and Christians killed than all other centuries combined.

According to OPEN DOORS, an organization that monitors this... approx.. Throughout the world approx.. 322 Christians are killed for their faith every month. 214 churches and Christian properties are destroyed every month.

In China between the years 2000 and 2007, 3000 Christians were killed.

Peter says, **don't be surprised....at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you....**

Fiery trial... the words used... metals going through the fire for the purpose of burning out all the impurities. IT IS A REFINING PROCESS.

Persecution comes to TEST YOU.... to refine you... take out all the impurities like WOOD, HAY, and Stubble...make you stronger, more like Christ.

SEE 1Peter 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Don't be Surprised... Don't be SHOCKED! Just go ahead and EXPECT IT. The Apostle Paul preached in various cities such as Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Philippi and Colossae. His habit was first to go to the synagogue of the Jews. Someone said, Paul could have asked 'by the way where is the local jail, I'll probably wind up there before it's over.'" Paul spent much time in prison. He was persecuted so much, he came to expect it. NO SURPRISE to Paul...

Jesus when he was with his disciples.... Said.. listen... if they persecute me, they will persecute you.

Don't be surprised.

2Timothy 3:12 *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

- B. Don't be surprised.... God loves you!

v.12 "Beloved..." These Christians needed to hear that! Every Christians, especially, going through hard times, suffering, and being persecuted need to be reminded.... They are LOVED by God....they are loved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need to remember **EPHESIANS 2:4** "...God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us..."

Romans 8:35-39

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

#1 Don't be Surprised..... the world is going the wrong way! Keep paddling...and get over the shock when you see the CURRENT flow of the culture going downstream; The ebb and flow of public opinion is constantly shifting downstream.

2. REJOICE IN CHRIST v.13

<p>v.13 ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.</p>
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Insofar as you share Christ's sufferings..... as you continue to PADDLE upstream.... Start rejoicing.....SING OF CHRIST AND HIS LOVE, AND BEAUTY, AND MAJESTY.....REJOICE IN CHRIST.

SING - because you SHARE IN THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

Acts 5:17-21; 40-42 (TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES)... Example - Peter with the other apostles....arrested for preaching Christ.

17 But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy **18** they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. **19** But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, **20** "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." **21** And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. *(the high priest along with the religious council came to get the apostles....found they were gone..... where are they?.... in the temple)*

⁴⁰ and when they had called in the apostles, **they beat them** and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, **rejoicing** that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

Acts 16:16-31 (THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL AND SILAS) ¹⁶ As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." ¹⁸ And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰ And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and **gave orders to beat them with rods.** ²³ And when they had **inflicted many blows upon them**, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns to God**, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶ and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.

Philippians 3:10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

(rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed)

2Cor 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

Matthew 5:10-11

¹⁰ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

¹² **Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward** in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

3. You are Blessed v.14

If you are insulted for the name of Christ... YOU ARE BLESSED. Don't ever think...when you are being persecuted the blessings of God are LEAVING YOU. Don't think God's Presence is leaving you.

When you suffer for Christ...the BLESSING GO UP! They are on the INCREASE. WE Just read that in one of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:11) ... blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you....and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Don't think... the blessings are gone.... rather... YOU ARE BLESSED... here's the reason...

Because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

We (as believers) already have the Indwelling Holy Spirit. But when you are being insulted, degraded because you are a Christian.... there is the ministry of the Holy Spirit....it's called here **the Spirit of glory**..... what is the Spirit of glory? This is surely speaking of the GLORY OF GOD that came for example in Solomon's temple...The temple was built and dedicated to the Lord....The glory of God came.... Cloud.... it's called the Shekinah glory....the glory of God's presence.

There is a supernatural working of God in your life...to help you endure what seems impossible.

There is an extra outpouring of God's grace to strengthen you in trying times.

Spirit of GOD **REST** UPON YOU---- the Greek word for "rest" is RELIEF, REFRESHMENT in your time of suffering....

It's the same as Jesus said

Matthew 11:28-29 ²⁸ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest.** ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and **ye shall find rest unto your souls.**

---YOU ARE BLESSED---

...**with the Spirit of glory**..... Glory is coming when we enter Glory Land....but there are times we need a taste of glory before we get there...

...with the **Presence of God** and **POWER of GOD** upon you giving you **REFRESHMENT...** and **RELIEF**

...**giving YOU REST.....**the kind of rest that results in peace, and serenity the kind the WORLD has no way of giving to you...

Example: Stephen...stoned.... He was paddling upstream..... the Jewish leaders were going downstream.....Stephen was going against the FLOW of JEWISH beliefs.....STONING/ found REST...RELIEF...Refreshment in Jesus.....They looked at Stephen....had the face of an angel... picture of peace, serenity... he experienced REFRESHING REST in Jesus.... the glory of God was there....heavens opened up and he saw Jesus standing.... Upstream He saw the glory of God....

Example: Paul... persecuted...He paddled against the CURRENT of what was popular...

2Corinthians 12:7-10

⁷ And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

⁸ For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

⁹ And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that **the power of Christ may rest** upon me.

¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, **in persecutions**, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

4. Glorify God as a Christian (vv.15-18)

When things get so tough to be a Christian...it's not a time to become a trouble maker. We should never be ashamed of being a Christian. **if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.... IN WHAT NAME???** the name of **Christian.**

ONE THING a Christian is NOT to do...taking matters into your own hands trying to make things right. Don't stop paddling your canoe...and start swinging at your critics as they pass by.

v.15 let none of you suffer as a murderer.... Peter took a sword and tried to kill one of the men who came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus told Peter..put the sword up.... Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? John18:11

Peter was trying to interfere with the very purpose for which Jesus came into the world... he came to die on the cross.

The kingdom of God is not built by taking your sword and wiping out all the pagans. That's murder.

Christians do not promote God's purpose by becoming a THIEF. Persecution left Christians without a job, a source of income. What do you do? Trust God, or steal from others?

Don't become known as an evildoer....a meddler (the word for trouble maker)...sometimes a person who calls themselves a Christian wants everyone to know about it....and they may even act as if "God had died and left them in charge." They become a meddler (troublesome person).

How will the Christian Glorify GOD?

v.17 when they submit to suffering as a way to draw closer to the Lord....

v.17 For it is time for judgment to begin.....

Right now.... Persecution serves to REFINE US... Burn out the impurities.... Make us more like Christ....

What will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (that's unbelievers).... We know the answer to that. There is the Great White Throne Judgement described in Revelation 20. No one will escape that judgement.

v.18 the righteous is scarcely saved..... Our salvation is complete when we get to the other side.....between the time we were saved and the time we arrive in glory.....it will be through great difficulty.... there will be the pain of suffering, persecution, heartaches...

the pain and difficulty will be NOTHING like the suffering that will come to the person who is NOT a believer... "do not obey the gospel of God"

quoting Proverbs 11:31

Proverbs 11:31 If the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!

That repayment...comes in suffering, persecution... discipline... judgment... HOW MUCH MORE..

The wicked!

5. Trust God v.19

Trust God... in whatever circumstances.... He knows best...

We trust our souls to a faithful Creator... God who created us... Has his omnipotent hand on all CREATION.... ..

He takes note every time a sparrow falls to the ground...

He has not forgotten us. He has not abandoned us.

When we suffer as a Christian...it is God's will. If you could look on God's calendar, He has you down, He has you scheduled to encounter certain things that's designed just for you.

1Cor. 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Keep on doing good...

Trust God the FAITHFUL CREATOR..... who not only gives life...

He sustains life... He will sustain us...