

1 Peter 4:12-19 – Suffering for Glory

Question: Is the contemporary 'gospel' the same gospel preached and lived by Jesus and the Apostles (Luke 9:23-26, 14:25-34)?

Review: 1 Peter 1:6-9 (suffer for our precious salvation and God's glory), 2:11-12 (suffer for God's glory), 18-22 (suffer for credibility and follow Jesus), 3:8-18 (suffer to honor Christ and give the gospel a fragrant aroma), 4:1-6 (suffer for righteousness sake)

“You only suffer for righteousness’ sake when you are visibly righteous. It is only when you live godly in an unrighteous culture that you create the hostility. If you manage to hide your virtue, if you manage to hide your testimony for Christ, if you manage to sublimate the fact that you are a Christian so that no one can perceive it, then it is unlikely that you will suffer. But for those who live righteous, those who demonstrate their commitment to Christ, those who speak boldly, those who say what needs to be said where it needs to be said, there will be a hostile reaction.” **John MacArthur**

The 5 R's of Suffering:

1. Requisite (expected) suffering (**vs. 12**):

John 15:18-24, **2 Timothy 3:12**, **1 John 3:13** (hatred because sin is exposed)

Peter's entire epistle has been about suffering, so we should not be surprised that he once again returns to exhorting his readers to be prepared to suffer. However, Peter says our suffering is cause for rejoicing, as it reveals the genuineness of our faith, and prepares us for eternity.

Beloved – A new section begins here. When suffering hits us hard, the tendency is to ask, “Does God really love me?” However, the measure of God's love for us is not found in our circumstances, but rather in what God has done for us. Remember we are greatly loved by God (**1 John 4:7-10**), and if He has gone to the trouble of saving us, will He not then see us through to glory (**Romans 5:8-10, Philippians 1:6**). Also, we can take solace in the example of Jesus – the cross was followed by immeasurable glory (**Hebrews 12:2**).

“Just as we learn the love of others by seeing what they are prepared to sacrifice for us, so is it even with God, Himself, we discover, discern, perceive and are made to know the love which He bears for us by the fact that 'He laid down His life for us.’” **Spurgeon**

Do not be surprised – Though the world is surprised that believers do not actively participate in sin with them, likewise, believers are not to be surprised (same verb as in **vs. 4**) when suffering comes from those same people (**2 Timothy 3:10-13**). Suffering is the believer's path to heaven, ordained by God (**Revelation 12:6,13-17**).

Fiery trial – Literally, furnace (**Psalms 66:10**, same idea in **Malachi 3:1-4**). This is a particular type of suffering – that which results from faith, for claiming Jesus as Lord. Peter again says that this testing is to reveal the genuineness of our faith (**comes upon you for your testing**). These fiery trials are used to refine our faith, to prepare us for our ultimate home, heaven (**Romans 5:3-5**). So, **suffering is not a sign of God's absence, but His presence with His people** (**Acts 7:54-60**).

As though some strange thing were happening to you – Again, as in chapter 1, Peter tells us our suffering is not the result of chance, but falls under the sovereign hand of God. There are no 'accidents' in the life of a believer!

“Afflictions quicken us to prayer. It is a pity it should be so; but experience testifies, that a long course of ease and prosperity, without painful changes—has an unhappy tendency to make us cold and formal in our secret worship. But troubles rouse our spirits, and constrain us to call upon the Lord in good earnest—when we feel a need of that help which we only can have from his almighty arm. Afflictions are useful, and in a

degree necessary, to keep alive in us—a conviction of the vanity and unsatisfying nature of the present world, and all its enjoyments; to remind us that this world is not our rest, and to call our thoughts upwards, where our true treasure is, and where our heart ought to be. When things go on much to our wish, our hearts are too prone to say, "It is good to be here!" **John Newton**, The Letters of John Newton

2. Rejoice in suffering – we are blessed (vs. 13-14):

Matthew 5:10-12

Know that in our suffering, we are in good company – there have been many who have walked the path before us.

Share Christ's sufferings – Not that we suffer in any redemptive way, but that we suffer for doing what is right, for teaching and living the gospel (**Galatians 6:17, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 1:24**). Suffering for Christ is a privilege (**Philippians 1:29**).

Notice also that Peter says that to the degree we suffer, we will be rewarded (*insofar, to the degree* – **Luke 6:22-23**).

Reviled (insulted) for the name of Christ – Peter again emphasizes that blessed suffering is that which comes due to direct association with Jesus Christ. This is not suffering for a cause, but suffering for Jesus (**Acts 5:41**). To suffer for the name of Jesus indicates we are true believers, and as such, the *Spirit of glory rests upon* us (**Acts 9:15-16**). This Spirit of glory (think Shekinah glory) is the full, glorious presence of God, and Peter says that in the midst of the darkest days of our suffering, we experience true rest (“give intermission from labor, refresh” - **Acts 7:55-56**).

Blessed - The advantages God confers to us. When we endure suffering joyfully, we confirm and strengthen our faith, and we have the presence and power of the Holy Spirit on us.

“Do the malicious resolve to crush you? They will use to the utmost their little power; but there is a higher power which will hold them in. Rejoicingly say, 'My times are in thy hand.' Do they treat you with contempt? Do they sneer at you What does that matter? Your honor comes not from men. Their contempt is the highest compliment the wicked can pay you.” **Spurgeon**, My Times Are In Thy Hand

3. Righteous suffering (vs. 15-16):

Not all suffering qualifies for God's blessing and joy – some is due to our sin. I think Peter understood the propensity for believers to rationalize punishments that are justly deserved, calling them “suffering for Jesus.”

Murderer – “The unlawful premeditated killing of one human being by another.” This is recognized even by the pagan culture as wrong.

Thief - “A person who steals, especially secretly or without open force.” Again, generally seen as a crime by the pagan culture.

These 2 blatant crimes (Peter is not inferring that believers within the church were actually committing these crimes) are listed for “*rhetorical reasons, so that believers will distinguish between genuine Christian suffering and suffering as a consequence of misbehavior*” (**Schreiner**, p. 224).

Evildoer – General term, meaning “wrongdoing in general, and is not limited to only criminal acts.” Can also mean someone “of a malicious disposition”, or one who seeks “an opportunity to injure” (**Strong**).

Troublesome meddler (*alotrioepiskopos*)- The word only occurs here in the New Testament. I think the best description is an “interferer (over-looker) in others' affairs.” I think we have similar thoughts in the writings of Paul (**1 Thessalonians 4:11, 2 Thessalonians 3:11, 1 Timothy 5:13**). I think in context, Peter is most likely referring to meddling in the sense of undue political agitation – attempting to 'push' the Christian 'agenda' onto the surrounding pagan culture (**1 Peter 2:13-15, 3:14-16**).

However, if our suffering is simply because we are a Christian (Christ-follower – by our righteous life and truth-speaking in love), then Peter says we can take not only solace in that, but we can praise God for the opportunity to “share in the sufferings of Christ.”

“When the pangs shoot through our body, and ghastly death appears in view, people see the patience of the dying Christian. Our infirmities become the black velvet on which the diamond of God's love glitters all the more brightly. Thank God I can suffer! Thank God I can be made the object of shame and contempt, for in this way God shall be glorified.” **Spurgeon**

4. Reckoned (future-oriented) suffering (**vs. 17-18**):

Judgment (i.e., purging, being conformed to the image of Jesus) is what is happening to the church now, before Jesus returns (that destruction from this 'judgment' is not in view here is evident in the parallel statement in **vs. 18** where the righteous are 'saved'). God has begun his judgment with the church, purifying her and preparing her for heaven (**Ephesians 5:25-27**). Our present suffering is real, painful, but necessary, as it prepares us for eternal bliss. This is why we embrace our suffering with joy!

However, his judgment will culminate with the judgment of the wicked, and it will be the unleashing of God's full wrath upon the sinner (**2 Thessalonians 1:4-10**). Notice Peter defines the unbeliever as “*those who do not obey the gospel of God*,” in keeping with his emphasis on obedience in this epistle.

5. Rest in suffering (**vs. 19**):

Therefore – In light of what Peter has just told us (expect suffering, endure suffering with joy as we know the ultimate outcome, suffering for Jesus is God's design for His church, and suffering purges us of sin). Because we have armed ourselves for the task at hand and are not surprised when we are called to suffer. Peter has given us the 'why' of our suffering, now he instructs us in 'how' to go about embracing it.

Those who suffer according to the will of God – Notice again, Peter stresses that suffering for the believer flows from will of God. Our suffering is not due to God's impotence or capricious nature, but rather flows from His fatherly concern for His children. As such, we can take solace in the fact that our suffering has an eternal purpose – it has significant meaning and benefit.

“God could have over-ruled every difficulty in your way, had he seen it expedient. But he is pleased to show you, that you depend not upon men—but upon himself; and that, notwithstanding your situation, may exclude you from some advantages in point of outward means. He who has begun a good work in you, is able to carry it on, in defiance of all seeming hindrances, and make all things (even those which have the most unfavorable appearances) work together for your good.” **John Newton, The Letters of John Newton**

Entrust (*paratithemi*)- from two words that mean, “to place right close beside,” the word means “*to put something into someone's care or protection, to assign the responsibility for doing something to someone, to deposit*.” Our job is to be faithful, 'do right,' and leave the rest up to God (**2 Timothy 1:12**, Jesus is our example – **Luke 23:46**). Putting it in the simplest terms: Do what is right, endure what comes because of that, and entrust yourself to (rest in) God. “Just do right!”

faithful Creator – This designation emphasizes again the sovereignty of God – He is in absolute control of all circumstances (**Ecclesiastes 7:13-14**). Also, as the Creator, He knows what is best for the creature. On top of all this, He is faithful – He will do what He promises (**2 Timothy 2:11-13**).

“Whatever is to come out of our life, is in our heavenly Father’s hand. He guards the vine of life, and he also protects the clusters which shall be produced thereby. If life be as a field, the field is under the hand of the great Husbandman, and the harvest of that field is with him also. The ultimate results of his work of grace upon us, and of his education of us in this life, are in the highest hand. We are not in our own hands, nor in the hands of earthly teachers; but we are under the skillful operation of hands which make nothing in vain. The close of life is not decided by the sharp knife of the fates; but by the hand of love. We shall not die before our time, neither shall we be forgotten and left upon the stage too long.” **Spurgeon, My Times Are In Thy Hand**

While doing good – To know our soul's care falls under the sovereign Creator's power, we will find contentment and joy in whatever circumstances we find ourselves as we pursue doing that which pleases God. We see the coming, certain destruction of the wicked (**vs. 17-18**), and we are not at all 'flattered' into pursuing things of this world (**Philippians 3:7-11**).