

I Peter 4:12-19
July 9, 2017

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: How do you view suffering? [Spoonful of cod liver oil that is “good for you” every now and then? Necessary? Disruption? Punishment for sin? Part of life?]

Transition: Every Christian who lives a godly life experiences a certain amount of persecution. On the job, in school, in the neighborhood, perhaps even in the family, there are people who resist the truth and oppose the Gospel of Christ. No matter what a believer says or does, these people find fault and criticize. Peter dealt with this kind of “normal persecution” in the previous part of his letter.

But in this section of the letter, theologians believe that Peter is preparing them for a special kind of persecution—a “fiery trial”—one that was about to overtake the entire church. It would not be occasional personal persecution from those around them, but ***official persecution*** from those above them. Thus far, Christianity had been tolerated by Rome because it was considered a “sect” of Judaism, and the Jews were permitted to worship freely. That attitude would change and the fires of persecution would be ignited, first by Nero, and then by the emperors that followed.

Though Peter is **teaching** these young Christians how to view suffering in a spiritually healthy way, we need to pay close attention because **all of us CAN endure suffering BY internalizing the RULES of suffering presented by Peter**. We’re looking for RULES and how to apply them.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.12:

- Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

V.13:

- But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

V.14:

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

V.15:

- If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.

V.16:

- However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

V.17:

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

V.18:

- And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

V.19:

- So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.12: What is **RULE #1**? [**Don’t be surprised** at the painful trial you’re suffering as though this is strange.]

Q: Persecution is not something that is alien to the Christian life. Throughout history the people of God have suffered at the hands of the unbelieving world. Can you think of some biblical characters who suffered unjustly? [Abel, Joseph, Daniel, Jesus,...]

X-REF: Jesus’s teaching on suffering because of persecution: Read John 15:17-16:4, then 16:33.

Q: What did Jesus teach His disciples? [They should expect opposition and persecution from the world, but it also came with a promise (be of good cheer b/c I have overcome the world)]

A word of caution: Not all of the difficulties of life are necessarily fiery trials. There are some difficulties that are simply a part of human life and almost everybody experiences them. Moreover, there are some difficulties that we bring on ourselves because of disobedience and sin. Peter mentioned these in 1 Peter 2:18–20 and 3:13–17. The fiery trial he mentions in 1 Peter 4:12 comes because we are faithful to God and stand up for that which is right. It is because we bear the name of Christ that the lost world attacks us.

Q V.13: What is **RULE #2**? [**Rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ.**]

Q: This is SO counterintuitive. HOW do we “rejoice” in the sufferings of Christ?! [Realize that you will be “overjoyed” when God’s glory is revealed. When we participate in the sufferings of Christ, we are not alone. **Our suffering means fellowship with Christ**. It is an honor and privilege to suffer *with* Christ and be treated by the world the way He was treated.]

X-REF to show examples of suffering in fellowship with Christ:

- Phil 1:29, 3:10 – “The fellowship of His sufferings” is a gift from God.
- Acts 5:41 – Apostles flogged for speaking the name of Jesus, and they “rejoiced” because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name of Jesus.
- Dan 3:23-25 – When Daniel and his two friends were thrown in the fiery furnace, they were not alone

Focus: Notice that God’s glory is revealed when we suffer for the name of Christ. Peter tells us that if we rejoice in the midst of suffering, then we can look forward to being overjoyed when His glory is revealed. But let’s be clear: God is not going to *replace* suffering with glory, but rather He will *transform* suffering into glory.

Analogy: Mature people know that life includes some “postponed pleasures or delayed gratifications.” 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, and we will be “glad also with exceeding joy” (see Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 3:11).

Q V.14: What is **RULE #3**? [**Consider yourself blessed if you are insulted because of the name of Christ.**]

Q: When you’re insulted because of the name of Christ, who is with you? [The Spirit of glory and of God, who is resting on you.]

Conclusion: We can consider ourselves blessed when we’re insulted because **our suffering brings to us the ministry of the Holy Spirit who enables us to glorify His name**. In other words, suffering Christians do not have to wait for heaven in order to experience His glory. Through the Holy Spirit, *they can have the glory now*. This explains how martyrs could sing praises to God while bound in the midst of blazing fires. It also explains how persecuted Christians (and there are many in today’s world) can go to prison and to death without complaining or resisting their captors.

Q V.15-18: What is **RULE #4**? How should we summarize it [**Suffer for the right reason!** Suffering should be because you are a Christian and unashamed of that, not because you brought deserved suffering on yourself as a murderer or thief!]

Q V.16: Peter says not to be ashamed for suffering for Christ. This implies that they did feel shame. What do you think shame looks like? [Form of embarrassment? Denying Christ?]

Q: Can you think of a time when Peter was ashamed of Christ? [He denied Christ three times before He was crucified.]

The bottom line: We should never be ashamed of Christ Let’s refresh our memories of other places in Scripture where the subject of being ashamed comes up:

- Heb 2:11 – Jesus is not ashamed of us (though we’ve given Him many reasons to be!)
- Heb 11:16 – The Father is not ashamed to be called our God.
- Heb 12:2 – On the cross Jesus despised shame for us, so surely we can bear His name and not be ashamed.
- Mark 8:38 – Jesus said, “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

Q V.16: If we’re not to be ashamed to suffer as Christian, how does Peter suggest we look at it? [Praise God that you bear that name!]

Note V.17-18: Peter contrasts those in the family of God who will face judgment vs those who are unsaved? These two verses may seem a bit confusing. Peter is not teaching that salvation is earned through personal trials or works, but simply that those who are saved are not exempt from temporal disciplinary judgments which are the natural consequences of sin. The writer of Hebrews also supports Peter: “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons.” Our present “fiery trial” is nothing compared with the “flaming fire” that shall punish the lost when Jesus returns in judgment (2 Thess. 1:7–10). The idea is expressed in Proverbs 11:31—“If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!”

Q V.19 – What is the last **RULE #5**? [Commit ourselves to our faithful Creator and continue to do good.]

Observation: This commitment is not a single action but a constant attitude. “Be constantly committing” is the force of the admonition. How do we do this? “By means of well-doing.” As we return good for evil and do good even though we suffer for it, we are committing ourselves to God so that He can care for us. This commitment involves every area of our lives and every hour of our lives.

LOOK:

When you endure suffering in the form of persecution, remember the RULES of suffering presented by Peter:

- #1: **Don't be surprised at the painful trial you're suffering as though this is strange.**
- #2: **Rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ.**
- #3: **Consider yourself blessed if you are insulted because of the name of Christ**
- #4: **Suffer for the right reason!**
- #5: **Commit ourselves to our faithful Creator and continue to do good.**

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 414–420). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

1 Peter 4:12–19

Every Christian who lives a godly life experiences a certain amount of persecution. On the job, in school, in the neighborhood, perhaps even in the family, there are people who resist the truth and oppose the Gospel of Christ. No matter what a believer says or does, these people find fault and criticize. Peter dealt with this kind of “normal persecution” in the previous part of his letter.

But in this section, Peter explained about a special kind of persecution—a “fiery trial”—that was about to overtake the entire church. It would not be occasional personal persecution from those around them, but *official* persecution from those above them. Thus far, Christianity had been tolerated by Rome because it was considered a “sect” of Judaism, and the Jews were permitted to worship freely. That attitude would change and the fires of persecution would be ignited, first by Nero, and then by the emperors that followed.

Peter gave the believers four instructions to follow in the light of the coming “fiery trial.”

Expect Suffering (1 Peter 4:12)

Persecution is not something that is alien to the Christian life. Throughout history the people of God have suffered at the hands of the unbelieving world. Christians are different from unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14–18), and this different kind of life produces a different kind of lifestyle. Much of what goes on in the world depends on lies, pride, pleasure, and the desire to “get more.” A dedicated Christian builds his life on truth, humility, holiness, and the desire to glorify God.

This conflict is illustrated throughout the Bible. Cain was a religious man, yet he hated his brother and killed him (Gen. 4:1–8). The world does not persecute “religious people,” but it does persecute righteous people. Why Cain killed Abel is explained in 1 John 3:12: “Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.” The Pharisees and Jewish leaders were religious people, yet they crucified Christ and persecuted the early church. “But beware of men,” Jesus warned His disciples, “for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues” (Matt. 10:17). Imagine scourging the servants of God in the very house of God!

God declared war on Satan after the Fall of man (Gen. 3:15), and Satan has been attacking God through His people ever since. Christians are “strangers and pilgrims” in an alien world where Satan is the god and prince (John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:3–4). Whatever glorifies God will anger the enemy, and he will attack. For believers, persecution is not a strange thing. The *absence* of satanic opposition would be strange!

Jesus explained to His disciples that they should expect opposition and persecution from the world (John 15:17–16:4). But He also gave them an encouraging promise: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). It was through His death on the cross of Calvary, plus His resurrection, that He overcame sin and the world (John 12:23–33; see Gal. 6:14).

The image of “fire” is often applied to testing or persecution even in modern conversation. “He is really going through the fire,” is a typical statement to describe someone experiencing

personal difficulties. In the Old Testament, fire was a symbol of the holiness of God and the presence of God. The fire on the altar consumed the sacrifice (Heb. 12:28–29). But Peter saw in the image of fire *a refining process* rather than a divine judgment (see Job 23:10; 1 Peter 1:7).

It is important to note that not all of the difficulties of life are necessarily fiery trials. There are some difficulties that are simply a part of human life and almost everybody experiences them. Unfortunately, there are some difficulties that we bring on ourselves because of disobedience and sin. Peter mentioned these in 1 Peter 2:18–20 and 3:13–17. The fiery trial he mentioned in 1 Peter 4:12 comes because we are faithful to God and stand up for that which is right. It is because we bear the name of Christ that the lost world attacks us. Christ told His disciples that people would persecute them, as they had Him, because their persecutors did not know God (John 15:20–21).

The word “happened” is important; it means “to go together.” Persecution and trials do not just “happen,” in the sense of being accidents. They are a part of God’s plan, and He is in control. They are a part of Romans 8:28 and will work out for good if we let God have His way.

Rejoice in Suffering (1 Peter 4:13–14)

Literally, Peter wrote, “Be constantly rejoicing!” In fact, he mentioned joy in one form or another *four times* in these two verses! “Rejoice ... be glad also with exceeding joy ... Happy are ye!” The world cannot understand how difficult circumstances can produce exceeding joy, because the world has never experienced the grace of God (see 2 Cor. 8:1–5). Peter named several privileges that we share that encourage us to rejoice in the midst of the fiery trial.

Our suffering means fellowship with Christ (v. 13). It is an honor and a privilege to suffer *with* Christ and be treated by the world the way it treated Him. “The fellowship of His sufferings” is a gift from God (Phil. 1:29; 3:10). Not every believer grows to the point where God can trust him with this kind of experience, so we ought to rejoice when the privilege comes to us. “And they [the Apostles] departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41).

Christ is with us in the furnace of persecution (Isa. 41:10; 43:2). When the three Hebrew children were cast into the fiery furnace, they discovered they were not alone (Dan. 3:23–25). The Lord was with Paul in all of his trials (Acts 23:11; 27:21–25; 2 Tim. 4:9–18), and He promises to be with us “to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). In fact, when sinners persecute us, they are really persecuting Jesus Christ (Acts 9:4).

Our suffering means glory in the future (v. 13). “Suffering” and “glory” are twin truths that are woven into the fabric of Peter’s letter. The world believes that the *absence* of suffering means glory, but a Christian’s outlook is different. The trial of our faith today is the assurance of glory when Jesus returns (1 Peter 1:7–8). This was the experience of our Lord (1 Peter 5:1), and it shall also be our experience.

But it is necessary to understand that God is not going to *replace* suffering with glory; rather He will *transform* suffering into glory. Jesus used the illustration of a woman giving birth (John 16:20–22). The same baby that gave her pain also gave her joy. The pain was *transformed* into joy by the birth of the baby. The thorn in the flesh that gave Paul difficulty also gave him power and glory (2 Cor. 12:7–10). The cross that gave Jesus shame and pain also brought power and glory.

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, and we will be “glad also with exceeding joy” (see Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 3:11).

Our suffering brings to us the ministry of the Holy Spirit (v. 14). He is the Spirit of glory and He has a special ministry to those who suffer for the glory of Jesus Christ. This verse can be translated “for the presence of the glory, even the Spirit, rests on you.” The reference is to the Shekinah glory of God that dwelt in the tabernacle and in the temple (Ex. 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10–11). When the people stoned Stephen, he saw Jesus in heaven and experienced God’s glory (Acts 6:15; 7:54–60). This is the “joy unspeakable and full of glory” that Peter wrote about in 1 Peter 1:7–8.

In other words, suffering Christians do not have to wait for heaven in order to experience His glory. Through the Holy Spirit, *they can have the glory now*. This explains how martyrs could sing praises to God while bound in the midst of blazing fires. It also explains how persecuted Christians (and there are many in today’s world) can go to prison and to death without complaining or resisting their captors.

Our suffering enables us to glorify His name (v. 14). We suffer because of His name (John 15:21). You can tell your unsaved friends that you are Baptist, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, or even an agnostic, and there will be no opposition; but tell them you are *a Christian*—bring Christ’s name into the conversation—and things will start to happen. Our authority is in the name of Jesus, and Satan hates that name. Every time we are reproached for the name of Christ, we have the opportunity to bring glory to that name. The world may speak against His name, but we will so speak and live that His name will be honored and God will be pleased.

The word “Christian” is found only three times in the entire New Testament (1 Peter 4:16; Acts 11:26; 26:28). The name was originally given by the enemies of the church as a term of reproach; but in time, it became an honored name. Of course, in today’s world, the word “Christian” means to most people the opposite of “pagan.” But the word carries the idea of “a Christ one, belonging to Christ.” Certainly it is a privilege to bear the name and to suffer for His name’s sake (Acts 5:41).

Polycarp was the Bishop of Smyrna about the middle of the second century. He was arrested for his faith and threatened with death if he did not recant. “Eighty and six years have I served Him,” the saintly Bishop replied, “and He never did me any injury. How can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?”

“I have respect for your age,” said the Roman officer. “Simply say, ‘Away with the atheists!’ and be set free.” By “the atheists” he meant the Christians who would not acknowledge that Caesar was “lord.”

The old man pointed to the crowd of Roman pagans surrounding him, and cried, “Away with the atheists!” He was burned at the stake and in his martyrdom brought glory to the name of Jesus Christ.

Examine Your Life (1 Peter 4:15–18)

In the furnace of persecution and suffering, we often have more light by which we can examine our lives and ministries. The fiery trial is a refining process, by which God removes the dross and purifies us. One day, a fiery judgment will overtake the whole world (2 Peter 3:7–16). Meanwhile, God’s judgment begins “at the house of God,” the church (1 Peter 2:5). This truth ought to motivate us to be as pure and obedient as possible (see Ezek. 9 for an Old Testament illustration of this truth).

There are several questions we should ask ourselves as we examine our own lives.

Why am I suffering? (v. 15) We noted before that not all suffering is a “fiery trial” from the Lord. If a professed Christian breaks the law and gets into trouble, or becomes a meddler into other people’s lives, then he *ought* to suffer! The fact that we are Christians is not a guarantee that we escape the normal consequences of our misdeeds. We may not be guilty of murder (though anger can be the same as murder in the heart, Matt. 5:21–26), but what about stealing, or meddling? When Abraham, David, Peter, and other Bible “greats” disobeyed God, they suffered for it; so, who are we that we should escape? Let’s be sure we are suffering because we are Christians and not because we are criminals.

Am I ashamed, or glorifying Christ? (v. 16) This statement must have reminded Peter of his own denial of Christ (Luke 22:54–62). Jesus Christ is not ashamed of us (Heb. 2:11)—though many times He surely could be! The Father is not ashamed to be called our God (Heb. 11:16). On the cross Jesus Christ despised shame for us (Heb. 12:2), so surely we can bear reproach for Him and not be ashamed. The warning in Mark 8:38 is worth pondering.

“Not be ashamed” is negative; “glorify God” is positive. It takes both for a balanced witness. If we seek to glorify God, then we will not be ashamed of the name of Jesus Christ. It was this determination not to be ashamed that encouraged Paul when he went to Rome (Rom. 1:16), when he suffered in Rome (Phil. 1:20–21), and when he faced martyrdom in Rome (2 Tim. 1:12).

Am I seeking to win the lost? (vv. 17–18) Note the words that Peter used to describe the lost: “Them that obey not the Gospel ... the ungodly and the sinner.” The argument of this verse is clear: If God sends a “fiery trial” to His own children, and they are saved “with difficulty,” what will happen to lost sinners when God’s fiery judgment falls?

When a believer suffers, he experiences glory and knows that there will be greater glory in the future. But a sinner who causes that suffering is only filling up the measure of God’s wrath more and more (Matt. 23:29–33). Instead of being concerned only about ourselves, we need to be concerned about the lost sinners around us. Our present “fiery trial” is nothing compared with the “flaming fire” that shall punish the lost when Jesus returns in judgment (2 Thes. 1:7–10). The idea is expressed in Proverbs 11:31—“If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!”

The phrase *scarcely be saved* means “saved with difficulty,” but it does not suggest that God is too weak to save us. The reference is probably to Genesis 19:15–26, when God sought to rescue Lot from Sodom before the city was destroyed. God was able—but Lot was unwilling! He lingered, argued with the angels, and finally had to be taken by the hand and dragged out of the city! Lot was “saved as by fire” and everything he lived for went up in smoke (see 1 Cor. 3:9–15).

Times of persecution are times of opportunity for a loving witness to those who persecute us (see Matt. 5:10–12, 43–48). It was not the earthquake that brought that Philippian jailer to Christ, because that frightened him into almost committing suicide! No, it was Paul’s loving concern for him that brought the jailer to faith in Christ. As Christians, we do not seek for vengeance on those who have hurt us. Rather, we pray for them and seek to lead them to Jesus Christ.

Commit Yourself to God (1 Peter 4:19)

When we are suffering in the will of God, we can commit ourselves into the care of God. Everything else that we do as Christians depends on this. The word is a banking term; it means “to deposit for safekeeping” (see 2 Tim. 1:12). Of course, when you deposit your life in God’s bank, you always receive eternal dividends on your investment.

This picture reminds us that we are valuable to God. He made us, redeemed us, lives in us, guards, and protects us. I saw a savings and loan association advertisement in the newspaper, reaffirming the financial stability of the firm and the backing of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. In days of financial unsteadiness, such assurances are necessary to depositors. But when you “deposit” your life with God, you have nothing to fear; for He is able to keep you.

This commitment is not a single action but a constant attitude. “Be constantly committing” is the force of the admonition. How do we do this? “By means of well-doing.” As we return good for evil and do good even though we suffer for it, we are committing ourselves to God so that He can care for us. This commitment involves every area of our lives and every hour of our lives.

If we really have hope, and believe that Jesus is coming again, then we will obey His Word and start laying up treasures and glory in heaven. Unsaved people have a present that is controlled by their past, but Christians have a present that is controlled by the future (Phil. 3:12–21). In our very serving, we are committing ourselves to God and making investments for the future.

There is a striking illustration of this truth in Jeremiah 32. The Prophet Jeremiah had been telling the people that one day their situation would change and they would be restored to their land. But at that time, the Babylonian army occupied the land and was about to take Jerusalem. Jeremiah’s cousin, Hanamel, gave Jeremiah an option to purchase the family land *which was now occupied by enemy soldiers*. The prophet had to “put his money where his mouth is.” And he did it! As an act of faith, he purchased the land and became, no doubt, the laughingstock of the people in Jerusalem. But God honored his faith because Jeremiah lived according to the Word that he preached.

Why did Peter refer to God as “a faithful Creator” rather than “a faithful Judge” or even “a faithful Saviour”? Because God the Creator meets the needs of His people (Matt. 6:24–34). It is the Creator who provides food and clothing to persecuted Christians, and who protects them in times of danger. When the early church was persecuted, they met together for prayer and addressed the Lord as the “God, which has made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is” (Acts 4:24). They prayed to the Creator!

Our Heavenly Father is “the Lord of heaven and earth” (Matt. 11:25). With that kind of a Father, we have no need to worry! He is the *faithful* Creator, and His faithfulness will not fail.

Before God pours out His wrath on this evil world, a “fiery trial” will come to God’s church, to unite and purify it, that it might be a strong witness to the lost. There is nothing for us to fear if we are suffering in the will of God. Our faithful Father-Creator will victoriously see us through!

Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 848-855). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

3. CHRISTLIKE FAITH (4:12–19)

Anticipating hardships the believers in Asia Minor were about to undergo, Peter encouraged his readers to endure suffering with Christlike faith so that they might be further identified with Christ, receive a blessing, and trust God completely.

4:12. Peter warned his readers about the coming of a more intense period of persecution. He again stressed mental readiness (cf. 1:13; 4:7): **Do not be surprised** (*xenizesthe*, “amazed”; cf. v. 4) **at the painful trial** (NASB **you are suffering translates this last phrase “the fiery ordeal among you.”**). The Literally rendered it could read “the among you burning.” The verb *pyrōsei*

is from *pyroō*, “to burn.” The meaning may be metaphorical as in 1:7 where the context is quite similar. However, the verse could also be aptly applied to the historical reality of the Neronian persecution. Christians were blamed for the burning of Rome. Some were covered with pitch and used as living torches to light the imperial gardens at night. Peter may have believed that the provincial officials were likely to follow their emperor’s example and stake-burn Christians in Asia Minor. Such persecution should not take the Christians by surprise **as though something strange** (*xenou*) were befalling them.

4:13. **But rejoice that you participate** (*koinōneite*, from *koinōneō*, “to share”; related nouns are *koinōnia*, “communion, fellowship, close relationship,” and *koinōnos*, “sharer”; cf. 5:1). Suffering for Christ’s sake should cause rejoicing because through suffering Christians further identify with Christ. Sharing in **the sufferings of Christ** results in (a) joy with Christ (the word **overjoyed** is “rejoice” in 1:6), (b) fellowship with Him (Phil. 3:10), (c) being glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17), and (d) reigning with Him (2 Tim. 2:12). The New Testament is clear that those who take part in the suffering of Christ also will take part in **His glory**, when it **is revealed** (*apokalypsei*; cf. 1 Peter 1:7; 5:1). Peter presented this truth as a cause for future hope and present rejoicing while enduring persecution.

4:14. Peter again referred to Jesus’ teaching (Matt. 5:11). If a Christian was **insulted** (cf. 1 Peter 3:9) **because of the name of Christ**, he should be considered **blessed** (*makarioi*; cf. 3:14). Anything that we suffer for the sake of Christ is a privilege, not a penalty. **The Spirit of glory and of God** (cf. Isa. 11:2; Matt. 3:16) refers to the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence within all who are identified by “the name of Christ” and thus suffer persecution (cf. 1 Peter 4:16).

4:15. Peter stressed that persecution was no excuse for lawlessness. Christians were not to retaliate (3:9). Physical violence was not to be met by murder. Confiscation of property was not to be compensated for by theft. No matter what their trials, Christians were to do nothing that would justify punishing them as criminals (cf. 2:19; 3:17). They were not to suffer **as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler**. Even interfering in other people’s affairs is out of place for Christians (cf. 1 Tim. 5:13).

4:16. There is no shame if one **suffer(s) as a Christian** rather than as a criminal. On the contrary, **that name** should be a source of praise to God for it identifies the bearer with the blessings of salvation (cf. v. 11). The term “Christian” (*Christianos*) occurs only three times in the Bible (here and Acts 11:26; 26:28). It may have been used derisively by unbelievers, as an insult.

4:17–18. Peter had referred to persecution and suffering as trials that refine and prove one’s faith (1:6–7) if reacted to in the will of God (3:17). Now he added that God allows persecutions as disciplinary judgment to purify the lives of those in **the family of God**. If believers need disciplinary earthly judgments (**if it begins with us**, a first-class condition which assumes the reality of the premise), how much more will **those who do not obey the gospel** (cf. 2:7) **the ungodly and the sinner**, deserve everlasting judgment? Peter quoted the Septuagint rendering of Proverbs 11:31, **If it is hard for the righteous to be saved**, to emphasize God’s disciplinary demands on His children. The vicissitudes of life are a part of God’s constant care, yet from a human perspective discipline is always “hard.” Peter is not teaching that salvation is earned through personal trials or works, but simply that those who are saved are not exempt from temporal disciplinary judgments which are the natural consequences of sin. The writer of Hebrews also supports Peter: “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons” (Heb. 12:7).

4:19. Believers could be sure that they were being called on to **suffer according to God's will** (cf. 2:15; 3:17; 4:2) if, having committed no crimes, they were suffering solely because they bore Christ's name. Peter encouraged suffering saints to endure through the exercise of Christlike faith. Just as Christ trusted Himself to His Father who judges justly (2:23), so should believers **commit** (*paratithēstōsan*, an accounting term, "to deposit or entrust") **themselves** (*psychas autōn*, lit., "their souls") **to their faithful Creator and continue to do good** (cf. 2:15, 20).

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