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# Sharing The Sufferings of Christ

## 1 PETER 4:12-19

### Introduction

1. If you were to open your New Testament to the Book of Acts and begin reading, I believe there is something with which you can't help but be amazed — the explosive growth of the church.
  - a. Acts 2:41 — “that day there were added about three thousand souls”
  - b. Acts 4:4 — “and the number of the men came to be about five thousand”
  - c. Acts 5:14 — “And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number”
2. Something else you can't help but notice is the tremendous persecution the apostles and these new believers constantly faced.
  - a. In the midst of his second sermon, Peter and John were arrested and put in jail until the next day (Acts 4:3).
  - b. No long after that, all of the apostles were put in jail (Acts 5:18).
  - c. Upon their release, they were beaten and ordered not to speak in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:40).
  - d. A man named Stephen was stoned to death because people didn't like what he was saying (Acts 7:57-60).
3. On and on it went, not just in Jerusalem, but wherever the gospel was proclaimed — cities like Antioch (Acts 14:4-6), Iconium (Acts 14:4-6); Lystra (Acts 14:19); Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-9); Berea (Acts 17:13); Corinth (Acts 18:12-17).
4. The apostle Paul was right when he said, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

5. This letter which Peter wrote was probably addressed to Christians in ten or more major churches.
6. From the things he has been saying, it is evident these believers were being mistreated because of their faith.
7. How does he tell them to respond to their suffering?
8. How should we respond to the trials which may come our way?
9. That is the question for us this morning.

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### I. How Should We Respond To Our Suffering?

#### A. DO NOT BE SURPRISED

“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;”  
(1 Peter 4:12, NASB95)

1. As with the Christians of Peter’s day, you too, if you live for any length of time upon this earth after becoming a Christian, you also will suffer for your faith.
2. When Peter referred to it as a “fiery ordeal (trial),” he was very likely thinking of something which Solomon had written almost a millennium earlier in Proverbs 27:21, “The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold . . .”
  - a. Fire is the means of testing and purifying silver and gold.
  - b. In the same way, this “fiery ordeal” is for our “testing.”
3. It purifies us and strengthens us as Christians.
4. Instead of being surprised at it, you and I should see God at work, helping us to grow stronger in our faith.
5. These trials are a normal part of our lives as Christians.

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#### B. KEEP ON REJOICING

“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.” (1 Peter 4:13, NASB95)

1. How are we to respond?
2. Peter said, “keep on rejoicing.”
4. Earlier, in the beginning of this letter, Peter said that this “proof of [our] faith” will result “in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7, NASB95).
5. Both Peter and Paul experienced such sufferings and yet kept on rejoicing:
  - a. In Acts 5, Peter and the apostles were brought before the ruling Council of the Jews beaten and ordered, again, “not to speak in the name of Jesus” before being released.
  - b. Luke tells us that “they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His [Jesus] name” (Acts 5:41).
  - c. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas after casting a spirit out of a slave-girl, were drug before the authorities and then beaten with rods before being thrown into prison (vv. 16-23).
  - d. Around midnight, Paul and Silas could be heard by the prisoners “praying and singing hymns of praise to God” (Acts 16:25).
6. For the apostles, increased suffering only served to increase their joy in the Lord. The same can be true for us. How so?
7. It confirms the fact that we truly belong to Christ:
  - a. Not only are we united with Christ, through our baptism, into His death and resurrection (Romans 6:5).

“For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,” (Romans 6:5, NASB95)

- b. We are also united with Christ in the whole pattern of His life, which includes His suffering for righteousness (1 Peter 2:20b-21).

“But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,” (1 Peter 2:20–21, NASB95).

- 8. Our ability to rejoice in our sufferings for Christ now will certainly lead to great rejoicing in His presence when He returns (cf. Romans 8:17).

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## II. Take Note Of The Reason For Your Suffering

### A. ARE YOU SUFFERING BECAUSE OF SIN IN YOUR LIFE?

“Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;” (1 Peter 4:15, NASB95)

1. Not all suffering is grounds for rejoicing.
2. Peter says that we should make sure that “none of [us] suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer.”
3. If we are breaking the laws of our land and are suffering the consequences of such actions, we are suffering because we broke the law.
4. In such a case, we have no grounds to say, “I am suffering for Jesus’ sake or for the sake of righteousness.”
5. There is a fourth term for which Peter says we must be careful not to suffer — that of a “troublesome meddler” (“meddler,” ESV, NIV, HCSB; “a busybody in other people’s matters,” KJV, NKJV).
  - a. This is someone who meddles in affairs which are not their proper concern.
  - b. When they do this, they disrupt the peace and harmony which exists within the congregation.

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## **B. ARE YOU SUFFERING BECAUSE YOU ARE LIVING FOR CHRIST?**

“If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you . . . but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.” (1 Peter 4:14,16, NASB95)

1. On the other hand, if any of you are “reviled, insulted or ridiculed” because we are Christians and are seeking to live the life which God has called us to live, Peter says “you are blessed.”
2. You are blessed, “because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you” (v. 14).
  - a. As the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God” (1 Corinthians 6:19, NASB95).
  - b. The Holy Spirit has taken up residence within you to strengthen you in your moments of suffering.
3. If you suffer because you are a Christian, don’t “be ashamed” (v. 16).
  - a. The name Christian appears on three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).
  - b. Each time it identifies the true followers of Jesus.
4. Instead of being ashamed, you and I are to “glorify God in this name [Christian].”
  - a. We are to speak and act in such a way that God is continually honored through our lives.
  - b. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul said, “whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, so all to the glory of God.”

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## **III. God’s Judgment**

### **A. IT BEGINS WITH US**

“For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God . . .” (1 Peter 4:17a, NASB95)

1. You as Christians are “the house [oikos] of God,” the building in which God dwells.
2. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul said to the believers in Corinth as a collective whole, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you” (1 Corinthians 3:16, ESV).
3. God’s judgment begins with us first.
4. The sufferings we endure and the trials we face serve to refine us.
5. They reveal to God those who really believe and are prepared to stand firm for their faith.

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### **B. ITS FEARFUL OUTCOME FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT OBEY THE GOSPEL**

“ . . . and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? **AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?**” (1 Peter 4:17b–18, NASB95)

1. These trials also reveal to God those who do not believe and fall away under trial.
2. Having said that God’s judgment begins with those of us who are Christians, Peter then asks, if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? “
3. Even the wise man Solomon pondered over this same issue, because it is him that Peter quotes in verse 18:

“**AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?**” (1 Peter 4:18, NASB95)

4. The apostle Paul has an answer for us. In his second letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, he lets us know that when “the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire” He will deal “out

retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

5. “These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed” (2 Thessalonians 1:9-10a).
6. I do not believe this is the outcome which any of us want when we finally stand before our Lord in judgment on the last day.

## Conclusion

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“Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.” (1 Peter 4:19, NASB95)

1. Our suffering in this life is a part of God’s good and perfect will.
2. Though it is a fact that all of us who desire to live godly lives will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12), it is also true that God has set a limit to the intensity of our suffering and how long we must endure it.
3. For this reason, Peter encourages each of us to do two things:
  - a. Entrust your soul to your faithful Creator (cf. Luke 23:46).

“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46b, NASB95).
  - b. Keep doing what is right.
4. To whom, other than God, would you entrust your eternal soul?
5. Will you do that today?