
Into Thy Word Bible Study in 1 Peter

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1 Peter 4: 12-19: "We May Suffer for Faithfully Being in Him!"

General idea: Persecutions and sufferings have a reason and a purpose! They have a way of refining and purifying us to allow the waste products of pride and selfishness to be tossed aside while His real redemptive work and sanctification comes into us in power and conviction. When the filth of pride has been removed (and God will use whatever to do this—even extreme suffering), we become more real and relevant to others. We also become better, more passionate witnesses when we remain faithful in Christ in spite of whatever we go through. Other people will become purified and better able to know Him and make Him known because of our lives, experiences, and dealings with others. The pretenders and counterfeit Christians will drop out of their dysfunctional service and their pride will no longer infest us, as people will see the real, wondrous, risen Lord displayed in the faithful.

Sufferings are also a warning, a sign to get right with God. He is the Great Judge and He has the right and power to do as He wills. He will show us our sins; if we are not convicted to repentance, we will suffer. This suffering has no purpose or glory other than to punish. We cannot blame God for this punishment for we bring it on ourselves! However, we can also be assured that when we are faithful, our sufferings serve to glorify Christ and to show Him and His majesty to others. We will be powerfully and effectively used in ways that will echo into eternity. Our time here is short; our time with Him is eternal.

Vs. 12-14: Trials are normal and should be welcomed. The theme here is to *be prepared*. Times are tough now, but they will get worse, so watch out! The reference here is to Nero, who was using Christians as the scapegoats for his actions as he went insane and burned down Rome. The world was now coming against the early Christians, but worse things were ahead. We are to expect bad things—not to seek them, bring them about, or rationalize our sin. Rather, we are to seek Him and His glory. We are to see persecution and bad things as opportunities to get closer to God and closer to one another. Life is not about what we have and what we lose; it is about our connection with God and with others. The question we need to ask ourselves is *are we prepared?* What will we do when times get tough and then get tougher?

- *Dear friends/Beloved* means "loved ones." It is a pastoral expression that indicates sincere love that shows care, tenderness, compassion, and affection. This expression is intended to show and give hope and real love to those who are weary in the midst of persecution (1 Pet. 1:22; 4: 8).

- *Do not be surprised.* Christ, who being God of the universe suffered; why should we be surprised when we go through it (Matt. 16:21-23; John 15:18; Col. 1:24-27; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 John 3:13)? At this time—in 64 A.D.—Rome was laying siege to Jerusalem, and many Christians were either being killed or captured as slaves and being burned alive by Nero to light his garden. Bad times are coming, so do not be surprised and lament; rather, get ready and learn to grow from them. Daniel 12 tells us that there will be great suffering before the End of Days when the wicked will be judged. The Jews believed if they suffered, they would hasten the end of days. Peter once scoffed at the idea that either he or Christ would suffer (Matt. 16:21-23). Peter's people were wondering if this was the end. All believers in all times have wondered if we are in the end times. The point is not *if* we are, but *how* we are in them with character and faithfulness!
- *Painful trials/Fiery trial* is figurative; it alludes to a furnace that melts down metal to flush out impurities. It means sufferings will show proof of your faith (Psalm 66: 9-10; Peter 1:6-7). This refers to any loss of physicality or property, but even more in losing our earthly relationships because of Christ. The Spirit that raised Christ also rests on us and will raise us! We have to beware that suffering can persuade us to doubt God's love and plan for us (Job 2:9; 2 Cor. 2:15-16)!
- *But rejoice* means rejoice in all things, including suffering, because we have His Divine grace and love. At the same time, we are responsible for moving ahead with our faith (Eph. 6:16; Phil. 2:12-13; James 1:2; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). This is an opportunity for us to show our good attitude and to be motivated (Matt. 24:30; Luke 17:30).
- *Participate in the sufferings of Christ.* As the Church universal, we are collectively the Body of Christ. Thus, when a Christian or a church suffers, so does He. Our sufferings do not add to His work of redemption or earn anything because of it; rather His sufferings cover us as atonement. It further identifies and intensifies us in Him (Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 1:29; Col. 1:24).
- *Insulted because of the name of Christ.* We can have staying power in suffering because we have exultation in Him, so it does not matter what else we have or do not have (Matt. 5:11-12; John 15:18-20; Acts 5:41; 14:22; Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 1:6-7).
- *Blessed* means fortunate, because what we will gain in eternity will out-weigh anything we experience (Luke 6:22-23). We are also fortunate because the presence and power of the Spirit and His glory rest on us!

- God is the God of Judgment also; He will have us, His children, give an account. How much more will those who refuse His grace give an account (Prov. 11:31; Ezek. 9)!

The key to dealing with suffering is a willingness to be anxious for Christ—to seek Him, and to have a firm desire for Him so nothing else that the world offers even interests us! Also, do not see it as a personal attack; rather, see it as an opportunity to be better for His glory!

Vs. 15-19: We will have friends who will think it strange that we have decided to follow and serve God. They will not understand and even try their best to entice us away. When their efforts fail, they and others will turn on us, betray us, and even become our enemies. Our comfort comes in knowing that for whatever they say or do, they will be held to account before our most Holy God. They are accountable for what they do, and they have the opportunity to receive Him. If they do not, it is not your fault as long as you exemplify Christ to the best of your ability with tact and maturity.

- *It should not be.* Do not come into suffering by your own misdeeds! Watch your conduct because when we suffer, we glorify Christ. However, there is no glory in evil acts, causing suffering in any way, or our pride thinking it will draw God's favor. The only charge a Christian should face is being a Christian!
- *Meddler* refers to people who scorn others, cynics, or those who are busybodies and snoop into the affairs of others negatively. Do not condescend to others!
- *Christian.* This term only appears twice in the Bible, and identifies a follower of Christ. It was only used by those who were persecuting the believers and was a term of shame and scorn—like calling someone a thief (Acts 11: 26; 26:28)! The point here is that it is noble to suffer for doing right. The term "Christian" eventually became our designation; we are never to be ashamed when we suffer, as it glorifies Christ!
- *Time for judgment means beware: judgment is still coming!* Sufferings and trials purify, refine, and strengthen us. They focus us on what is important and true, and away from the trivialities of the daily and the sinful life, drawing us deeper and more powerfully to Him (Mal. 3:1-5; Heb. 12:1-13). Peter was using this theme to encourage his people and us that God is still in control; His Kingdom is here and it is coming! We can then be faithful in Him.
- *What will come.* All that happens to us, when we are obedient, is the will of God! This is a rhetorical question meaning since we will be held accountable, so much more will those who are against Him and us. This also points to the judgment of the Church, where the fakes and the ungodly are held

accountable and condemned while the righteous ones are exulted (Jer. 25:18-25; Ezek. 7:7-12; 9:6; Amos 3:2; 1 Pet. 4:6). Suffering can also be used as discipline! Thus, always seek the reason for suffering. Did you cause it? A real Christian whose faith is in Christ has no need to fear judgment; rather, he or she should look forward to it and to their reward (Phil. 1). The prideful and unbelievers on the other hand....

- *Hard for the righteous to be saved.* Peter is saying that even those who conformed could not be saved without God's supernatural intervention! This is a quote from Proverbs 11:31, and refers to phony righteousness. There is a clear distinction between those who are in Christ, who follow His precepts and conform to and from His love, and those who are pretending to be in Him or do not conform to Him (Psalm 11:6; 73:18-19; Prov. 1:18, 31).
- *What will become of the ungodly.* Even though God gives us His grace and elects us, we still must respond to Him. This is *difficult* even with the Spirit's intervention, as our sinful nature always rejects God. We have no salvation, hope, or purpose without God's grace (Acts 26:1-11; Rom. 1: 10; 17 3:23; 5:5; 8:2; 10:5-8; Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:4-6).
- *Commit themselves.* This is a prayer similar to a benediction as our lives are committed into God's hands and care (Psalm 31:5; Luke 23:46). Entrust yourselves to Christ! Faith requires our faithfulness to continue in, to pursue, and to build on what God has given. Even when we face extreme suffering, God is still with us, empowering us. We can remain faithful and grow from our experiences. Thus, we must not become disillusioned, fearful, or turn away from Him! Faithfulness will be rewarded beyond our grasp to envision it (Micah 6:8)!

Are you being harassed, gossiped about, slandered, or mistreated? If not, it will come. We are called to prepare for it and seek reconciliation if possible; our good character will prevent others the ammunition to fight us. However, we also need to examine what we are doing wrong. Is there reason from our behavior that what they say is true? If so, we need to mend our ways. If their accusations are false, then take comfort as Christ went through it, and He will take you through it too. You will learn, grow, and be stronger, and God will be glorified by your good faith! We have to get this important point: suffering has a purpose and a reason—it is for our benefit and God's glory. We should never think of it as shame or as meaningless; rather, we should see it as a badge of honor. Because we live in Christ, we can have great confidence and hope. This material world is very temporary; we are being shaped for eternity!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?

2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me? How am I encouraged and strengthened?
4. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
5. How can I be changed so I can learn and grow?
6. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
7. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
8. What can I model and teach? What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How do you feel when someone calls you a “dear friend” or lets you know that you are a “loved one?”
2. Why is it important for us to show care, tenderness, compassion, and affection to others—especially those in stress?
3. How do you think persecutions and sufferings have a reason and a purpose? How do they refine and purify us? How do they help us become more real, helpful, and relevant to others?
4. How does going through tough times help remove pride and selfishness?
5. How do sufferings act as a warning, as a sign to get right with God? Have you seen this in your life? How so? When this happens, what should you do?
6. Do you know that bad times are coming? How do you feel about it? Why should we not be surprised or lament about it? What can you do to get ready for it and learn to grow from it?
7. Peter once scoffed at the idea that Christ or he would suffer. What do you think took place to change him? How does his growth help motivate you?
8. Many Christians fret or become obsessed about the End Times. How do you feel about it? Have you considered that the point is not *if* we are in them or *when* they will come, but how we are with character and faithfulness when they do come?

9. Knowing that suffering can persuade you to doubt God's love and plan for you, what can you do to take heed?
10. Have you seen Christians who have gone through suffering become better and more passionate witnesses for Christ? How so?
11. What does it mean to have staying power in suffering? How could you grow with more trust in Him? Do you recognize that you are exalted in Him? Can you see that it does not matter what else we have or have not? How does this help you?
12. What does it mean to take comfort in Christ when times are hard? How can you make this more so? How can the fact that when you are faithful, your sufferings glorify Christ and show Him and His Majesty to others, give you further resolve and comfort?

In this world you will have trouble but take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33)

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