

1 PETER: SUFFERING AND JOY

Living Hope Series #5, 1 Peter 4:1-19

July 5, 2020

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

1 Peter 4:12-13

Dear friends

1 PETER

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

- GOD'S PEOPLE ARE A MISUNDERSTOOD MINORITY, LIVING UNDER THE RULE OF A DIFFERENT KING
- PERSECUTION OFFERS A CHANCE TO SHOW OTHERS THE GENEROUS LOVE OF JESUS.

1:1-2 GREETING

HELLO, GOD'S PEOPLE WHO ARE CHOSEN & EXILED. OLD TESTAMENT DESCRIPTIONS OF ABRAHAM & ISRAEL.

1:13-2:10 A NEW FAMILY IDENTITY

OLD TESTAMENT IMAGES OF GENTILE CHRISTIANS. "GOD YOUR LORD" (SEE EXODUS 12:11). THE HOLY PEOPLE IN THE WILDERNESS (SEE LEVITICUS 11:1-7). THE NEW EXODUS & PASSOVER (SEE EXODUS 12-15). THE NEW COVENANT PEOPLE (ISAIAH 40, JEREMIAN 31). THE NEW TEMPLE (ISAIAH 26:16, PSALM 118:22). A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS (EXODUS 19:4-6).

2:11-4:11 SUFFERING AS A WITNESS TO JESUS

2:13-17 SURRENDER TO ROMAN KILL. 2:18-20 CHRISTIAN SLAVES, GIVES & HUSBANDS. THE PROBLEM: HOUSEHOLDS EXPECTED TO SUBMIT & WORSHIP THE PATRIARCHAL GODS. THE RESPONSE: CHRISTIANS ARE LIBERATED TO LOVE THEIR ENEMIES. 3:6-11 THEIR FUTURE VINDICATION. PERSECUTED & MURDERED. VINDICATED & EXALTED.

1:3-12 SONG OF PRAISE

"PRAISE GOD WHO CAUSED US TO BE BORN AGAIN INTO A LIVING HOPE." SUFFERING IS A PURIFYING FIRE THAT CAN DEEPEN OUR FAITH (1:7).

4:12-5:9 SUFFERING & FUTURE HOPE

4:12-13 REJOICE WHEN PEOPLE PERSECUTE YOU BECAUSE OF ME. 5:1-5 LEADERS TO CARE FOR THE CHURCH. 5:6-7 THE REAL ENEMY: SPIRITUAL EVIL. "RESIST EVIL WITH FIRM FAITHFULNESS." 5:9.

5:10-14 CLOSING

MAY GOD STRENGTHEN YOU! GREETINGS FROM THE CHURCH IN BABYLON & ROME. ARCHITECTURE FOR CONQUEROR RULERS (SEE JEREMIAN 50-51). GOD'S PEOPLE ARE TAKEN FROM THEIR TRUE HOME.

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Suffering and sin

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. ² As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³ For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴ They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵ But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

1 Peter 4:1-6

1) Key question: Who is “he”? The answer: “He” is _____

Note: both Karen Jobes and the ESV Study Bible have good discussions of the “he” in 4:1

2) Suffering does away with sin by _____

3) Don't be afraid to be _____

Note #2: Doug agrees with most commentators who understand “those who are now dead” to be believers who have died before. Peter is addressing the same question that Paul addresses with the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

A church ready for “T” tribulation

⁷The end of all things has drawn near [the perfect tense here reflects a past action with continuing implications]

Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled

for the sake of your lives together before God [second sense of “prayers”]

⁸having, above all, earnest love toward each other, because love covers over a multitude of sins;

⁹[being] “stranger-lovers” to one another without grumbling;

¹⁰serving one other, each one as he has received a Spirit-gift,
as faithful administrators of God’s grace in its various forms.

¹¹Whoever speaks, as [speaking] the words of God.

Whoever serves, as [serving] out of the strength that God supplies

So that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Pete 4:7-11 (Doug’s arrangement from the ESV and NIV)

1) The nearing of “the end” (see Acts 2:16-17) means _____

2) Our prayers can mean 1. _____ (see Ephesians 6:10-20)

or 2. _____ (see 1 Peter 3:7)

3) Peter wants to prepare the church for suffering in trials, in “t” tribulation and in “T” tribulation by

1. _____ practiced in the body

2. _____ practiced in the body

3. _____ practiced in the body

Suffering and glory

¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 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. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 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? ¹⁸ And,

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

1 Peter 4:12-18 (quoting from Proverbs 11:31, but read at least eight proverbs on each side!)

Note #1: Peter changes the OT purpose of “painful trial” (Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:1-3) from judgment to sanctification and “apocalyptic” joy. Judgment has always begun with the people of God.

Note #2: This section of 1 Peter is, I believe, Peter’s commentary on the Beatitudes (especially Matthew 5:2)

1) _____ for insult and judgement

2) The true grief in suffering is _____

Suffering and faith

¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

1 Peter 4:19

1) You can _____ God’s will because

God is _____

God is _____

2) Instead of surprise, we respond to suffering by _____ :

to _____ (1 Peter 3:11-17)

to _____ (1 Peter 3:18-22)

and, since Christ suffered, so that _____ (1 Peter 4:1-19)

Resources for further studies of 1 Peter

I found Kenneth Wuest's "First Peter in the Greek New Testament" very helpful (Eerdmans, 1942).

Bob Deffinbaugh's sermons on 1 Peter at <https://bible.org/seriespage/20-final-word-suffering-1-peter-412-19>

Spurgeon's series of messages on 1 Peter at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/by-scripture/1-peter>

ThirdMill has a collection of sermons on 1 Peter at <https://thirdmill.org/sermons/series.asp/srs/1%20Peter>

John Piper has a wonderful series of 1 Peter sermons at desiringgod.org

Reformation21's "resident aliens" blog on suffering at <https://www.reformation21.org/blog/suffering-and-redemption>

Ligon Duncan, and other First Presbyterian, Jackson, preachers has a wonderful series of messages at <https://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/scripture/1-peter>

Karen H. Jobes' commentary of 1 Peter in the Baker Exegetical Commentary series (Baker Academic, 2005). She is even better on 1 Peter 4.

The Gospel Coalition produced this animated introduction (on which this week's coloring page is based) and study taken from the ESVSB at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/1-peter-introduction/#overview>

Jonathan Edwards' wonderful 1 Peter 2:9-10 sermon at <https://www.biblebb.com/files/edwards/chosen.htm>

The Gospel Coalition offers a introductory lecture series on 1 Peter at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/study-1-peter/#course-introduction>

	A.D.	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80
Peter becomes a disciple of Jesus (A.D. 28/30)		■										
Just before the crucifixion, Peter denies Jesus (30/33)		■										
Death, resurrection of Jesus (33 [or 30])†		■										
Peter witnesses resurrection, preaches at Pentecost (30/33)		■										
Peter becomes key church leader (30/33)		■										
Peter witnesses to Cornelius (38*)				●								
Peter imprisoned by Agrippa, rescued (41–44*)				■								
Peter leaves Jerusalem (44)				●								
Peter goes to Rome (50–54*)						■						
Nero's reign (54–68)							■					
Peter writes first letter, from Rome (62–63*)								●				
Fire in Rome; Nero blames, kills many Christians (64 [July 19])								●				
Peter, after writing second letter, is martyred in Rome (64–67*)								■				

1 PETER

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

• GOD'S PEOPLE ARE A MISUNDERSTOOD MINORITY, LIVING UNDER THE RULE OF A DIFFERENT KING.

• PERSECUTION OFFERS A CHANCE TO SHOW OTHERS THE GENEROUS LOVE OF JESUS.

SIMON PETER
(ARABIC; KENNAH) GREEK
- KEY LEADER IN THE EARLY FIRST DISCIPLES
JEROME/NT CHURCH (4TH C) 1:10

YOU ARE A ROCK!
(MATTHEW 16:18-19)

TO REBUILT CHRISTIANITY ASIA MINOR
(1:11)

HOSTILITY & HARASSMENT
(1:12-17)

TO REBUILT CHRISTIANITY ROME SALVUS
(1:13)

1:1-2 GREETING

HELLO, GOD'S PEOPLE AND ARE **CHOSEN & EXILED**...
(1:1-2) (1:1-2) (1:1-2)

OLD TESTAMENT DESCRIPTIONS OF ABRAHAM & ISRAEL
(1:1-2)

GENTILES AND WOULD BELONG TO THE FAMILY OF ABRAHAM...
(1:1-2)

1:3-12 SONG OF PRAISE

PLEASE GOD AND CAUSED US TO BE **BORN AGAIN** INTO A **LIVING HOPE**. (1:3)

NEW HOPE NEW IDENTITY NEW FAMILY

SUFFERING IS A **PURIFYING FIRE** THAT CAN DEFEAT OUR SIN. (1:7)

1:13-2:10 A NEW FAMILY IDENTITY

OLD TESTAMENT IMAGES APPLIED TO GENTILE CHRISTIANS
(1:13)

THE PROBLEM: HOUSHOLDS OF SLAVES TO BORN TO CHRISTIAN SLAVES, WIVES & HUSBANDS.
(2:18)

THE RESPONSE: CHRISTIANS ARE URGED TO LOVE THEIR ENEMIES.
(2:21)

THE REAL ENEMY: SPIRITUAL EVIL
(2:14)

RESIST EVIL WITH FIRM FAITHFULNESS.
(2:15)

2:11-4:11 SUFFERING AS A WITNESS TO JESUS

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5:10-14 CLOSING

THE REAL ENEMY: SPIRITUAL EVIL
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created by the Bible Project

A Final Word on Suffering (1 Peter 4:12-19)

Deffinbaugh at <https://bible.org/seriespage/20-final-word-suffering-1-peter-412-19>

12 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; 13 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.

14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 15 By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.

17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?

19 Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Introduction

Contemporary secular society has a theology of suffering easily summed up in two words seen on bumper stickers all across the country. While I cannot quote the bumper sticker exactly, you will recognize it when I tell you it reads, "... happens." Using King James' vocabulary, the sticker reads, "Dung Happens."

One surely wonders why anyone would make such a crude statement. It is because these two words sum up a view of suffering radically opposed to the suffering Peter teaches in our text. I must confess I did not know what the sticker meant until an unsaved relative used the expression in a context which made its theological content quite clear. After citing several instances of apparent senseless suffering, he summarized his thoughts with the two-word slogan: "Dung happens."

If we were to "exegete" this slogan, we would now emphasize the following affirmations (not truths). First, this theology believes that suffering = dung. Suffering is not just worthless; it is repugnant and disgusting. It has no value. It is detrimental, something we would do well to be rid of once for all. Second, suffering is random and senseless, similar to a drive-by shooting which comes upon innocent victims unexpectedly without reason or provocation. It just happens.

The contemporary theology of suffering believes suffering is unpredictable and unavoidable; we can do nothing to avoid it and certainly we cannot make something of it. We can only passively accept and endure, hoping it will end as soon as possible. Suffering is like toxic waste we cannot possibly be rid of ourselves.

Christians must categorically disagree with this theology of suffering. First, we know that while God does not "cause" all suffering, He does allow it. No suffering comes our way but that which God has purposed for our good and for His glory. God may not "cause all things" but He does "cause all things to work together for good, to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose" ([Romans 8:28](#)). Therefore, the Christian dares not view suffering as a negative experience ("dung") but as something positive. Suffering is neither random nor senseless; it is part of the divine plan. We also dare not look upon suffering as something we merely endure; for the Christian, suffering is an experience in which we may rejoice.

This is precisely Peter's teaching in our text. Verses 12-19 of [1 Peter 4](#) are Peter's final words of instruction to suffering saints. Peter sets out in these verses the attitudes and actions we should manifest in suffering. He also buttresses his teaching with numerous reasons these should be embraced and exemplified in our lives. Heeding Peter's words will revolutionize our attitudes and actions. We could never again embrace the "bumper sticker" theology of suffering.

Sufferings' Different Categories

Peter does not address every form of suffering in this text. He speaks primarily of one type of suffering. It may be helpful, however, to recall the types of suffering¹⁴⁵ found in the Bible:

- (1) Suffering because we are a part of a fallen creation ([Romans 8:18-25](#)).
- (2) Suffering the temporal consequences of personal sin (believers and unbelievers): [Deuteronomy 28:15–30:20](#); [Proverbs 1:20-33](#); [4:19](#); [13:15](#); [15:19](#); [Matthew 18:15-20](#); [Acts 5:1-11](#); [1 Corinthians 5:1-13](#); [11:27-30](#).
- (3) The eternal suffering of hell for rejecting Christ ([Luke 16:19-31](#); [2 Thessalonians 1:5-10](#); [Revelation 20:11-15](#)).
- (4) The sometimes “involuntary” suffering or chastening at the loving hand of God to enhance our trust and obedience as His sons (Job; [Hebrews 12:1-13](#); [James 1:1-4](#); [1 Peter 1:6-7](#)).
- (5) Voluntary suffering in identification with Christ and in living a godly life ([John 15:13](#); [Acts 20:33-35](#); [Romans 12:10](#); [15:1-3](#); [1 Corinthians 8-10](#) [see especially 9:1-27]; [Philippians 2:1-4](#); [3:7-11](#); [Colossians 1:24](#); [1 Peter 2:12, 18-25](#); [3:15-17](#); [4:1, 12-19](#)). This is suffering one purposes to endure, suffering one knowingly brings about by doing what is right.

The Appropriate Attitude For Suffering Saints (4:12-18)

“Do not be surprised,” but “Keep on rejoicing” (verses 12 and 13). Suffering should not take the Christian by surprise. Old Testament saints such as Job and Joseph suffered, and virtually all the Old Testament prophets suffered ([Matthew 5:12](#); [Acts 7:51-53](#)). Jesus taught that His followers would suffer ([Matthew 5:10-12](#); [10:22, 24-25](#); [Mark 13:9-13](#); [Luke 6:40](#); [21:12-19](#); [John 15:18-21](#); [16:1-4](#)), and He Himself suffered, setting an example for us to follow ([1 Peter 2:21-25](#)). The apostles and many in the early church suffered, and they taught that we too should expect suffering ([Acts 4](#) and [5](#); [9:16](#); [14:22](#); [2 Corinthians 1:5-7](#); [Philippians 3:10](#); [2 Thessalonians 1:3-4](#); [2 Timothy 3:12](#); [Hebrews 10:32-34](#); [James 1:1-4](#); [1 John 3:13](#)). Still further, we are to consciously choose the path of suffering ([1 Peter 4:1](#)).

Since there is no good reason for suffering to catch the Christian unaware, why are some Christians surprised when suffering comes our way? One reason is the wide-spread preaching of a distorted gospel in which Christ is presented as the key to earthly bliss and the solution to all our problems. While Paul taught that the gospel is the “power of God unto salvation” ([Romans 1:16](#)), many doubt its power and attempt to “merchandize” the gospel by slick, secular techniques and gimmicks which emasculate the gospel (see [1 Corinthians 2](#); [2 Corinthians 2:14-17](#); [4:1-4](#)). False teachers do not just modify the gospel; they proclaim another gospel which appeals to the flesh (see [2 Timothy 3:1-4:8](#), [2 Peter 2](#)). As a result, many think they are Christians who are not. Such pseudo-Christians become evident when suffering occurs, and they quickly abandon their profession of faith (see [Mark 4:10-20](#); [John 6:22-60](#)).

Unfortunately, a number of true believers also fail to grasp the future dimensions of the blessings brought about by the sacrificial work of Christ. They believe that because Christ suffered in their place, they no longer need to suffer. They are told that if they but have the faith, they may live in a constant state of blessing, experiencing many of heaven’s blessings now. The televangelists’ prosperity movement is only one manifestation of this error. Such thinking fails to understand our Lord’s teaching on discipleship (see [Luke 9:23-26](#), 57-62; [John 15:18-21](#)) and the apostles’ teaching (see [Acts 14:22](#); [2 Timothy 2:12](#); [3:12](#)). They do not understand that Christ is still rejected by the world ([1 Peter 2:7-8](#)) and that we share in His suffering and rejection (see [Philippians 1:29-30](#); [3:10](#); [Colossians 1:24](#)). Discipleship is not about self-actualization or self-indulgence; it is about self-denial (see [1 Corinthians 9:24-27](#)). Our present experience is not the “crown” but the “cross.”

In many Christians’ minds, one’s plight in this life should be thought of *only* in terms of contrast with the next. It is true that we must suffer now in order to experience glory later. But in verses 12-13, Peter insists that we must also think in terms of continuity. We must “rejoice” now (verse 12) in order to “rejoice” later in heaven (verse 13). We praise God now, and we praise Him eternally as well. The difference is that our rejoicing and praise will be much greater in heaven, for there our exultation and praise will be unhindered and untainted by sin.

Peter knows that some of his readers do not expect to suffer and will therefore be surprised when it comes. Surprises are of two types: a happy surprise and an unwanted surprise. Both are unexpected, but one is welcome and the other is not. Peter speaks here of the unwanted surprise. He knows some of his readers will experience the same type of surprise unbelievers experience:

3 For the time already past is sufficient [for you] to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 And in [all] this, *they are surprised* that you do not run with [them] into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign [you] ([1 Peter 4:3-4](#), emphasis mine).

The surprise of the Gentile unbelievers is displeasure and chagrin. They are shocked because we have renounced the self-indulgent lifestyle we once shared with them, and they are dismayed and threatened by our godly conduct. As a result, they malign and persecute us. They are threatened by good works and self-control (see [Acts 24:25](#)).

But the believer should not be surprised when suffering comes his or her way. Instead of suffering being greeted as an unwelcome visitor, we should “keep on rejoicing” ([1 Peter 4:13](#)). Our lives should be characterized by this rejoicing even in the midst of suffering. This practice of the apostle Paul is so evident in his epistle to the Philippians (see, for example, 1:18). Paul wants our attitude likewise to be one of continual, persistent rejoicing.

In verse 16, Paul expands on this double-edged exhortation. Just as suffering should not be the cause of surprise, neither should it be the source of shame. Just as we should “keep on rejoicing” in suffering, so we should “glorify God.” Shame ought to be the result of guilt, regardless of whether contemporary psychology validates this truth or not. If suffering for the name of our Lord results in a feeling of shame, then we not only falsely pronounce ourselves as guilty, but we look upon our Lord as guilty, as unworthy. Peter experienced this sense of shame at the arrest of our Lord, and the result was his three-fold denial of the Master. But Peter learned his lesson well, and he hopes to spare us from the same experience. Let us not feel ashamed. Shame is the result of guilt, and praise is the result of glory.

When we grasp the *greatness of our God, the worth of our Savior, and the preciousness of His sacrifice* (see [1 Peter 1:18-21](#)), we glorify Him for the privilege of suffering for His name’s sake. As Peter experienced shame, so he later expressed praise for the glory of God, even though he was persecuted for identifying with Christ:

23 And when they had been released, they went to their own [companions,] and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard [this,] they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, “O Lord, it is Thou who DIDST MAKE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, 25 who by the Holy Spirit, [through] the mouth of our father David Thy servant, didst say, ‘WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? 26 THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD, AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.’ 27 For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur. 29 And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, 30 while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus.” 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and [began] to speak the word of God with boldness ([Acts 4:23-31](#)).

Counting our Blessings in Suffering

When we suffer for Christ’s sake, we are to consider ourselves blessed. Suffering for Christ’s sake is not a curse but a blessing. Peter sets down a number of reasons why suffering is a blessing in verses 12-18:

(1) The suffering we experience for Christ’s sake is innocent suffering (see 2:11-25) brought about by the expression of Christ’s righteousness in our lives (4:19). It is not suffering that results from our sin (4:15). Such suffering should be an encouragement to us, an evidence of our victory over sin in Christ (see 4:1).

(2) Suffering for Christ's sake is the will of God. Even as it was the Father's will for Christ to suffer for our sins, so it is His will that we suffer as we identify with Christ (see [Acts 2:23](#); [Colossians 1:19-20](#); [1 Peter 2:15](#); [3:17](#); [4:19](#)).

(3) Suffering for Christ's sake is not only for the glory of God, but for our own good. Suffering for the name of Christ produces these spiritual fruits:

Suffering for Christ's sake proves and improves our faith. It is difficult to grasp, but even our Lord was "improved" by suffering:

10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings ([Hebrews 2:10](#)).

Suffering sets us apart from unbelievers as a people of faith (see [1 Peter 1:6-7](#)). It develops and strengthens our faith ([1 Peter 4:12, 17-19](#); see [Romans 5:3-5](#); [James 1:1-4](#)).

Suffering facilitates a detachment from this world and its lusts (*see 4:1-2*). Peter has already urged us to forsake fleshly lusts (1:14; 4:2). Those who suffer for righteousness evidence a certain measure of victory over the flesh (see 4:1-2). The flesh no longer rules us (see [Romans 6:14, 16-18](#)), but, through the Spirit, we make our bodies our slave ([1 Corinthians 9:24-27](#)). Earthly suffering reminds us of the brevity of this life and the eternal blessings of the next, creating a hunger for heaven and a consequent detachment from this world (see [1 Corinthians 7:32-35](#); [2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10](#)).

Suffering now is no picnic, but it is vastly more desirable than entering into the suffering of eternal judgment. Peter's words in verses 17 and 18 are perplexing:

17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?

From other biblical texts, we know "judgment" is vastly different for believers than unbelievers. Saints are judged not for salvation, but for rewards (see [1 Corinthians 3:10-15](#)). Sinners are judged according to their works because they have rejected God's provision for salvation in Christ ([John 3:16-19](#); [2 Thessalonians 3:6-9](#); [Revelation 20:11-15](#)).

From Peter's words here, we can surmise:

- (1) There is a coming "judgment," which seems to lie shortly ahead for Peter's readers;
- (2) "Judgment begins with the household of God," followed afterward by the judgment of unbelievers;
- (3) Whatever difficulties believers may face in time, the eternal suffering of unbelievers is incomparable. Our sufferings may seem great, but they do not hold a candle to what lies ahead for the lost.
- (4) Suffering now is an encouragement because we know we are not among those whose suffering comes later.
- (5) There is a relationship between our suffering in time and divine judgment. But just what is the connection? Peter may be saying the only "judgment" (i.e., condemnation) a believer will experience is the "condemnation" the world pronounces on us because of its rejection of Christ. Our condemnation comes from the world for a short time for living righteously in identification with Christ; their judgment comes from God for all eternity because of their sin. This seems to be the connection Paul makes in [2 Thessalonians 1](#):

3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is [only] fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows [ever] greater; 4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. 5 *[This is] a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.* 6 For after all it is [only] just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and [to give] relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our

Lord Jesus. 9 And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed ([2 Thessalonians 1:3-10](#), emphasis mine).

In suffering for the name of Christ, we experience a greater sense of union and intimacy with God. When suffering for Christ's sake, we are assured of a special measure of the ministry of the Holy Spirit: *If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you* ([1 Peter 4:14](#)).

When we are reviled for being Christians, we are truly blessed. The source of this blessing is the Holy Spirit, who abides on us in a special way. He is the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God.

As I understand Peter's words, the Holy Spirit has a special ministry to us in times of suffering for Christ's sake. We know from our Lord's words that the Spirit will give us the words to speak when we are brought before hostile governing authorities (see [Mark 13:9-11](#)). Here in 1 Peter, we are told that the Holy Spirit manifests glory and God Himself. When do we need assurance of God's presence and pleasure (His will) more than when we are attacked by men for our faith in God?

It would seem that when our Lord was baptized by John, it was in anticipation of His suffering and death. Our Lord voluntarily committed Himself to this path, knowing it was the will of the Father. When we are baptized, we look back to Christ's death, and by our baptism we publicly identify ourselves with Him, His suffering, death, and resurrection. At Christ's baptism, the Spirit descended upon Him. The baptism of our Lord assured Him of the Father's presence and pleasure, as well as the glory of the kingdom which would come as a result of His atoning work. When we identify with Christ's suffering by our own, we share as well in the ministry of the Spirit, assuring us of God's presence and pleasure and of the glory which lies ahead.

Did not Stephen experience this at his time of suffering?

54 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they [began] gnashing their teeth at him. 55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; 56 and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." 57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse. 58 And when they had driven him out of the city, they [began] stoning[him,] and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon [the Lord] and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" 60 And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And having said this, he fell asleep ([Acts 7:54-60](#)).

While Paul's experience was not as dramatic as Stephen's (whose death Paul witnessed), Paul found in his suffering for Christ's sake a deeper sense of intimacy and fellowship with His Lord:

10 That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death ([Philippians 3:10](#)).

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions ([Colossians 1:24](#)).

Suffering for Christ's sake should therefore produce rejoicing (4:12-14) and praise to God (4:16). As we find ourselves drawn more closely to Christ and to the Father, as we experience a greater measure of the Spirit's ministry in our lives, as we see our faith proven and promoted, our hearts should overflow with gratitude and praise. Suffering is no longer perceived as simply pain but as a privilege (see [Philippians 1:29](#)). Seeing suffering from Peter's perspective should transform our attitude toward this aspect of our identification with Christ and His cross.

Appropriate Actions of Suffering Saints (4:19)

19 Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Having instructed his readers about their attitude toward suffering, Peter now moves on to the actions appropriate to these attitudes. “Therefore” indicates that verse 19 is a logical outworking of what he has just taught. Those who suffer righteously, in the name of Christ and in the will of God, should “entrust their souls to a faithful Creator ...”

The term “entrust” (and the word “faithful”) indicates we are dealing with a matter of faith. Suffering righteously requires faith. This is very evident in [Hebrews 11](#), and we shall see why shortly. Suffering righteously requires us to entrust our souls to God. What else can we entrust to God other than our souls? After all, this is the unseen part of us which makes it to heaven (see [Matthew 10:28](#)). Entrusting ourselves to a *faithful* Creator is trusting in His character, in His faithfulness.

6 And without faith it is impossible to please [Him], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and [that] He is a rewarder of those who seek Him ([Hebrews 11:6](#)).

Our Lord entrusted His soul (or spirit) to God: *23 And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting [Himself] to Him who judges righteously* ([1 Peter 2:23](#)).

46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT .” And having said this, He breathed His last ([Luke 23:46](#)).

And so did Paul: *For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day* ([2 Timothy 1:12](#)).

We are also to commit our souls to God. The Saviour, through His sacrificial death, has become the “Shepherd and Guardian of our souls” ([1 Peter 2:25](#)). We are to entrust our souls to a “faithful Creator” (verse 19). Why would Peter use the expression “faithful Creator” to refer to the One to whom we are to entrust our souls?

In answering this question, we should first note that Peter and the rest of the newly-born church in Jerusalem worshipped and praised God as the Creator after being persecuted by the Jewish religious leaders:

24 And when they heard [this,] they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, “O Lord, it is Thou who DIDST MAKE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM” ([Acts 4:24](#)).

A most beneficial clue to our answer is found in the Book of Isaiah in the way God is referred to as the “Creator.”¹⁴⁶ Isaiah speaks of God as the “Creator” in several senses. (1) God is the Creator of the world ([Isaiah 40:21-26; 42:5; 44:24; 45:18](#)). As such, God distinguishes Himself from all other “gods” who are man-made and must be carried about by men. In sharp contrast, God is our Creator; He made us and He is the One who conforms us to His image. (2) God is the Creator of Israel ([Isaiah 43:1-7](#), 15, 21; [44:1-2; 45:11](#)). In a similar sense, He is our “Creator” (see [John 1:1-3](#), 12-13; [Ephesians 2:10](#)). (3) God is the Creator of new things ([Isaiah 42:1-25](#) [see especially verses 9f.]; [48:1-11; 65:17-25](#); see also [2 Peter 3:7-13](#)). We need not look only to the past to find God as “Creator;” we can also look to the future, for He still has much to create:

17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem [for] rejoicing, And her people [for] gladness. 19 I will also rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in My people; And there will no longer be heard in her The voice of weeping and the sound of crying... ” 24 “It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb shall

graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain," says the LORD ([Isaiah 65:17-19](#), 24-25).

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells ([2 Peter 3:10-13](#)).

Now do you see why Peter instructs us to entrust our souls to a "faithful *Creator*"? Because the things we hope for do not exist. It is not just that they are not seen; they cannot be seen because they do not exist yet. The things for which we hope are the very things God Himself must create. No wonder we must worship God as the Creator; it is fundamental and foundational to our future hope.

Peter does not simply leave us to contemplate the commitment of our souls as an academic, intellectual, or philosophical matter. Instead, he instructs us how we commit our souls to our "faithful Creator:" by "doing what is right." Peter has been telling us that the suffering of which he writes is that prompted by righteousness (2:11-12, 20-25; 4:1-5, 13, 15) and certainly not by sin (see 2:19-20; 4:15). Commitment to Christ is more than mere profession; it is a matter of practice (compare [James 2:14-26](#)). When we know that "doing the right thing" will provoke the wicked to persecute us, doing what is right becomes an evidence of our faith in the "faithful Creator."

Conclusion

Years ago, the White Sisters recorded a song which went something like this:

Must Jesus bear the cross alone, And all the world go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone, And there's a cross for me.

I used to think this song was doctrinally incorrect. Christ suffered for our sins on the cross, once for all. How then can we say we must also bear a cross?

We can, and we must. Christ suffered *for our sins* once for all. This is precisely the reason Peter instructs us that our suffering for Christ's sake must not be for sin. When Christ suffered on the cross, He did so for us, to bear our sins. When we take up our cross and suffer for His sake, it is for righteousness. The work of Christ on the cross of Calvary is complete, but until He returns in glory, His rejection by men continues (see [1 Peter 2:6-8](#)). When we identify ourselves with Christ and His righteousness is lived out in our lives, men reject Him by rejecting us; they persecute Him by persecuting us.

Our Lord had to bear the cross of Calvary alone so that sinners might be set free from sin and from death. But there is a cross every saint must bear: the cross of self-denial and suffering for Christ's sake. In and of itself, suffering is no pleasure. But in light of Peter's teaching, it is a privilege and a cause for rejoicing, seeing the outcome of the process God is bringing about through the pain of suffering and persecution.

Suffering is a part of God's divine plan for the saints, as well as for lost sinners. Suffering is included among the "all things" God causes to work together for His glory and our good ([Romans 8:28](#)). And thus it is a blessed privilege.

But suffering is also a choice. When suffering unexpectedly comes our way, we must choose whether to rejoice or to react in surprise. Suffering is also a path which we must choose or reject, if I understand the words of our Lord and those of the apostles,

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it" ([Matthew 16:24-25](#); see also [Luke 14:25-35](#)).

1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin ([1 Peter 4:1](#)).

Suffering is a path we must choose. And when we do so, we determine by God's grace to live righteously, knowing that in so doing we will bring opposition and persecution.

Having now seen the contrast between the Christian's view of suffering and the secular perspective, "Dung Happens" well expresses secular theology's view. But the Christian view is the opposite.

This contrast is most apparent in Paul's epistle to the Philippians. Note what Paul considers "dung."

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed [is] not grievous, but for you [it is] safe. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, [of] the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things [but] loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them [but] **dung**, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ([Philippians 3:1-10](#), KJV, emphasis mine).

The world considers suffering as "dung," something which just happens and must be begrudgingly tolerated. For Paul, those things the world counts as glorious (as he once did as well), he now considers "dung." The best the world has to offer is but dung compared to what is found in Christ. What Paul sees as glorious, the world calls dung. What the world sees as glorious, Paul calls dung.

Only salvation through Christ can transform one's values the way Paul's life was transformed. Only when we see Christ as precious do we see the things of this world as valueless, indeed, even detrimental. Have you found Him to be precious? Have you trusted in His shed blood as God's provision for your sin? I earnestly urge you to do so even now. When you do, you will be able to join with Paul in the words of [Philippians 3](#) and with the hymn writer of these words:

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold, I'd rather be His than have riches untold;
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land, I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.

Chorus:

Than to be the king of a vast domain Or be held in sin's dread sway;
I'd rather have Jesus than anything This world affords today.
I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause, I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause;
I'd rather have Jesus than world-wide fame; I'd rather be true to His holy name.
He's fairer than lilies of rarest bloom, He's sweeter than honey from out the comb;
He's all that my hungering spirit needs, I'd rather have Jesus and let Him lead.¹⁴⁷

145 There are also different forms of suffering, which we shall not enumerate but only suggest a few. In 1 Peter, there is the suffering of cruel treatment one may endure at the hand of superiors to whom we submit ourselves (2:13-25). There is the suffering of speech--of slander and reviling (2:12, 23; 4:14). In Hebrews, there is the suffering of imprisonment and seizure of property (10:32-34). In Job's case, suffering came in the form of natural calamities, human sin and cruelty, and physical infirmities ([Job 1](#) and 2).

146 See [Isaiah 4:2-6](#) [v. 5]; 40:21-26 [26]; 42:5-9 [5]; 43:1-7 [1]; 43:15-21 [15]; 44:1-28 [2, 21, 24]; 45:8-19 [8, 9, 11, 12, 18]; 65:17-25 [17]).

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Attitudes Which Revolutionize Relationships

Word Concept	Definition	New Testament Parallel	Divine Attribute	Antonym (contrast)
Harmonious	Having one mind	Rom. 12:16; 15:5-7 John 17:20-23 Acts 4:32, 41-47 1 Cor. 1:10 ; chapter 12 2 Cor. 13:11 Eph. 4:3 Phil. 1:27; 2:2; 3:15; 4:2	Phil. 2:5 Matthew 4:1-11 John 5:30-32	Factious Titus 3:9-11 3 John 9-10 1 Cor. 1:10-12 Contentious 1 Cor. 6:1-11
Sympathetic (literally, “suffer together”)	Sensitivity to what others are going through	Rom. 12:15 1 Cor. 12:26 Heb. 13:3	Heb. 4:15; 10:34 John 11:35	Detached 1 Cor. 12:14-18 Self-centered and thus insensitive to impact on another – Romans 14-15 1 Cor. 8-10
Brotherly (Philadelphia)	Brotherly love	Rom. 12:9-10 1 Thess. 4:9 Heb. 13:1 1 Pet. 1:22 2 Pet. 1:7	John 11:35-36 ; 13:1; 15:12-15	Hate your brother 1 John 3:14-15; 4:20
Kind-hearted	Compassionate Deep feeling Merciful “Affectionately sensitive—quick to feel and show affection” (Stibbs, p. 129)	Good Samaritan, Luke 10:30-37 Eph. 4:32 2 Cor. 7:15 Phil. 1:8; 2:1 Col. 3:12 Philemon 12 1 John 3:17	Jesus — Matt. 9:36 ; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34 ; Mark 1:41 ; 8:2; Luke 6:36; 7:13	Aloof, Uncaring Luke 13:10-17
Humble in spirit	Humility Prov. 29:29 Acts 20:19 Romans 12:16	Eph. 4:2 Phil. 2:3 Col. 2:18, 23; 3:12 1 Pet. 5:5	Matt. 11:29 Phil. 2:5-8	Proud, Arrogant
Not Vindictive	Forgiving Gracious Lev. 19:18 Prov. 20:22; 24:29	Matt. 6:12-15 Luke 6:27-36 Rom. 12:14-21 1 Cor. 4:12-13 1 Thess. 5:15	Matt. 5:44-45 Luke 6:27-38	Vengeful, Retaliatory

This chart gives parallel passages which refer to the particular attitude either as a characteristic of the Christian or as an attribute of God. It is my contention that each of these characteristics is an attribute of God which should be evidenced in the Christian as well.