

Do Not Be Surprised

1 Peter 4:12-16

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, November 26, 2017

Good Morning. You can go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the book of 1 Peter. While you're turning to the book of 1 Peter this morning, we are in a series called "The Suffering Church," where we're talking about how the church should handle pain and suffering. We've been in this for several months now, talking about pain and hard times. And to start us out today, I want to do something a little different. I have a pop quiz for you. How many of you want to say, "Oh, boy, I haven't had one of those in ... " No? Okay. To get your mind on our passage, I have a test for you, and I actually want to write your answer down in the notes. If you get this right, Richard Procee will give you \$100. I haven't asked Richard yet, but he has a servant's heart, so I'm sure he'll be happy to do that. Here it is. Here's your pop quiz: I want you to finish this sentence, "You can tell someone is a Christian when they blank." Brad: "Suffer well." Actually, I changed the answer from the "Grace for your Day." I write that thing on Monday, and then I study the passage all week, and I go, "Hmm, that's not exactly what ... " So, no, that's not the answer. It's a good answer. Actually, that is the answer, but Brad, you got to say it out loud and you ruined it for everyone. No, that's good. Alright, "Suffer well." There're actually several ways to answer this question. I was thinking through this this week: "You can tell someone is a Christian when they ... " One way, that some of you might think is with a profession of faith. Some of you might say, "You can tell someone is a Christian when they profess Jesus with their mouth." After all, the Bible does say that, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus as Lord,' and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." That's a good answer. Scriptures also say, "If you call on the name of the Lord, you'll be saved." The problem with that answer though, is that the Bible also says, "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord,' and I will declare to them, 'I never knew you.'" And Jesus says in Luke 6, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" That's a good answer, but the problem is, you can make a false profession. You can say you're saved when you're not, so we need another way to answer this, something a little more oomph to it. You might go another direction and say, "You can tell someone is a Christian when they quote Scripture." After all, you might have put that on your sheet. After all, you can't be saved without the Word of God and you can't be saved without the Bible. But the problem with this answer, is that the devil knows the Bible too. And the devil knows more Scripture than anybody in this room; he's a wonderful theologian. The same goes for the demons. James 2:19 says, "You believe God is one, that's good, but the demons also believe and tremble." So we need another answer to this question, and I think you can find it by looking at the book of 1 Peter, as Brad just mentioned. 1 Peter's about suffering: "You can tell someone is a Christian when they suffer well." I think another way to say this is, "You can tell someone is a Christian when they persevere. You can tell someone is a Christian when they hang in there, and don't give up, and don't quit." If you got that answer right, Richard's sitting right back here in the corner. He can make that check payable in US or Canadian, whichever one you prefer. Brad: Alright. His truck is actually parked over here in the corner too, so you can go grab him, if he's running after the service, but ... One of the Puritans said it this way, they said, "The one virtue you can't fake is perseverance." They said, "You can fake a lot of things, but you can't fake endurance." Another one said, "The test of a Christian is how well he does in a storm. Like the pilot of a ship, you must prove yourself in troubled waters." We had a saying back home that, "The proof is in the

pudding." Do you guys say that here. that the test is in the eating? You can show me a picture of the pudding all day, but I want to eat it. I want to see what's in there. It's the same way with Christians. The test of your faith is found in suffering; it's not found in easy times. That's why God gives us the hard times, to prove our faith.

I was meeting with our Care and Discipleship Group last week. Have you guys enjoyed the Care and Discipleship Groups? Have they been a blessing to you? If you haven't plugged into one of those, I want to encourage you to do so. You can come see me after the service, come see Jordan Henderson, we can get you plugged into one of those groups, but they're our small group Bible studies that meet every other week for fellowship and encouragement. And we were meeting with ours last Sunday, at the Les' house, and several people were talking about the dark days ahead. You can't watch the news or see what's on the social media without seeing that the days ahead are stormy days. The world is becoming hostile. You go in the grocery store and tell someone you're a Christian, you can feel the air go out of the room. But the good news is, as the days get stormier, that actually helps us as Christians. The good news is that shows us how we respond to that shows us how we are saved. Anybody can be a Christian when life is good, but what are you like when life is bad? That's the question, right? That's what God wants to know. Anybody can please God when it's easy, but what do you live like when it's not? A friend of mine says there's only two types of Christians at the end of the day and only two, there are the professors and there are the possessors. There are those who profess faith in Christ, and there are those who possess faith in Christ, they actually have it. They're the real thing. And the way you tell the two apart is how they suffer. The way you tell is how they respond to hard times, not easy times, but hard times, not smooth seas, but troubled seas, stormy waters and dark days.

In His Parable of the Sower, Jesus, if you remember, tells us about seed that fell on rocky places, where it had no soil and no foundation. And when the sun rose, and the wind blew and beat against the plant, it died, because it had no root. And Jesus, our Lord, said, "Some people are like that. When the sun rises and the wind blows, they die." George Whitefield called them "stony ground hearers." During the colonial days of North America, George Whitefield preached to thousands. Some say that, "More knew the face of George Whitefield, than they knew the face of George Washington in colonial America." He preached to at one time, 30,000 people. Benjamin Franklin actually did experiments to see how far his voice could project without microphones. He was blown away by it. And people would ask him, "Mr Whitefield, you have some of the largest crowds we've ever seen. Why don't you count the conversions you get? Why don't you count the number of people who were saved at the end of your times preaching to them?" And he said, "Because there are too many stony ground hearers." He said,

There are too many people who hear and fall away. They listen, they get excited, they get all worked up, but when the sun comes out and the wind blows, they're gone, and I don't ever see them again. So I want to give them time before I say they're converted. I want to give them time before I see what's going on in their heart.

I think we could all take a cue from that. It seems like, a lot of times, some of our churches are heading in the other direction. Several years ago, I heard on the radio that a local church in Indiana was building an archery range on their campus, and I thought, "Why would you do that? What's the point?" I'm not saying you can't do that, but what's the thinking behind that? Are you

trying to draw in stony ground hearers? I've heard of other churches building skateboard parks or having wrestling matches with their pastors. I think I would win that, by the way, 'cause I'm the only pastor here ... But the problem with that, is that doesn't help you learn how to suffer. It presents Christianity as fun and games, and Christianity is not all about fun and games. You could say it this way, none of that stuff works in a third world country. The churches that you see that are doing those kind of things are in wealthy communities; they're not in poor communities. People in third world countries don't want wrestling matches; they want to eat, they want to know how to suffer. And all this leads us to the book of 1 Peter.

1 Peter was written to people who were suffering. It was written to people who didn't need fun and games; they needed to know how to handle hard times. I told you before, the word "suffering" occurs 16 times in this letter, 'cause that's what it's about. It's a book about suffering; it's a book about pain.

Just to give you some background on this, we haven't gone into a lot of detail on this before, so let me do that here. 1 Peter 1:1, if you look at the very first verse of the book it says, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." He said a few words about those areas: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, but they were all provinces in the territory of Asia Minor. That's attractive land in what is now modern-day Turkey. If you don't know where that is, Turkey is southeast of Europe and northeast of Africa. It's kind of a land bridge between the two continents. And it's quiet now, you don't hear much about Turkey, but it was very loud back then, and very violent. A major trade route passed through that part of the world, connecting those continents.

And unfortunately, we don't know a lot about all the provinces in here. But we do know something about one of them, the province of Galatia. Galatia's mentioned, the second one here in the list in verse 1. If you remember, Paul wrote a letter to the Galatians and he planted a church there in Galatia. In fact, Acts 14 says, "The first time Paul was there," it said, "Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, which were in the province of Galatia, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city." That's how Paul started the church in Galatia; he got stoned and drug out of the city. Now, thank you very much for not doing that to me, when I first came to Chilliwack. I think I might have said, "I'll go home now." Paul stuck with it. But that really matched the temperament of these people.

The word "Galatian" comes from the word "gaul," which meant "warrior." Some of you have heard of the Gauls. They're descendants of the Celts or the Druids; they're the ones who built Stonehenge. They came from Europe, and migrated into Asia Minor, and they were hated by everybody there. They practiced human sacrifices, which was an abominable thing to do. You can imagine, if your neighbours did that, that would be horrible. They fought all the time. They were known as drunkards and traitors. Julius Caesar said they couldn't be trusted; they kept breaking their deals with Rome. They would go through an area, plunder and steal everything, and then move onto the next town and do it again. And even while they were in Asia Minor, they had so much trouble with their neighbours, that their boundaries kept changing. They would attack their neighbours, steal a little territory, and then lose it, back and forth, all throughout their whole time.

And this is who Peter is writing to here. This is one of the groups he's writing to, a bunch of drunken misfits, a bunch of bullies, you could call them. And you can just imagine, if you got saved out of a world like that, it would be very hard for you. It would be a life and death sort of thing. And so Peter writes this letter to them to encourage them, and say, "It'll be okay, because the Lord is protecting you." That's the theme of chapter 1: "You're protected by the power of God and He's saving you." This is the theme of chapter 2: "He's saving you in the government, and in the workplace, and in the home, so no one can hurt you there." It says the same thing in chapter 3. And then he comes to chapter 4. And as he's writing to the Galatians and all these other people groups, he says this ... If you want to read chapter 4:1-16, we're gonna read all the way through that ... He says,

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, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of [And this just describes the life of the Galatians] sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God. 7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. 8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 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 on you. 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

Now, there's a lot in here and I can't get to everything, other than to point out that Peter starts off by saying, "Arm yourselves, so as to live no longer in the lust of the flesh." In other words, "Get ready to suffer, because you're not gonna live like your neighbours anymore," these people who used to loot, and pillage, and kill everybody. "You're not gonna live like that. You're saved now. You're different and there's gonna be a backlash over it," he says. "They're not gonna like it, so be ready." He says, "Because the end is near," in verse 7, "Jesus is coming back soon, so if they don't like it, that's okay. It's not gonna last for long." I don't know about you, but I can get through anything, if I know it's going to end: A bad meal, bad conversation, bad weather. I hear

it does stop raining in BC, sometime in the spring and summer. But Peter says here, he says, "The end is coming, and as a result, you need to love each other, be hospitable, give the glory to God."

And then he says this in verse 12, "Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you." That's the next application here. "Don't be surprised when your neighbours attack you. Don't be surprised when there's a backlash." I think so many times we struggle with suffering, because we're surprised by it. You go in the grocery store, and you tell someone you're a Christian, and the air goes out of the room, and you're shocked. Well, what did you think was going to happen? Did you think they're gonna hug your neck and say, "That's wonderful?" That does happen, but not always. When you told your neighbour they're going to hell, did you think they were gonna like that? Sometimes we're surprised. And when it happens, when we're persecuted, Peter says, "Don't dry up and die like a bunch of stony ground hearers." That's the application here. "Don't flake up and flake out. You have to persevere. You have to hang in there." And Jesus says in Matthew 24, "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved." He says in Luke 21, "By your endurance, you will gain your lives." Paul says, "Through many tribulations, we will enter the kingdom of God." He doesn't say, "Through many parties." He doesn't say, "Through many fun times." He doesn't say, "Through archery ranges and wrestling matches." He says, "Through tribulations." And that's the idea. This is what you can expect, if you're a Christian. You can expect hard times. You can expect good times, and we'll talk about that in a minute, but you can expect things to be difficult, and that's what we're gonna talk about this morning.

If you're taking notes, in 1 Peter 4:12-16, we're gonna talk about some expectations for the Christian life. That's how Peter starts this paragraph off, by talking about expectations. He says, "Don't be surprised, because they had some wrong ideas about the Christian life." You can imagine, if you got saved out of the province of Galatia, you would be shocked by all the hatred, and bitterness and violence that would be heaped on you. And you would think you did something wrong. Peter says, "You didn't do anything wrong. This is what you can expect. This is normal." And then he goes on to give some other expectations. Let's talk about that this morning. By the way, I'll give you some good expectations at the end, but bear with me through some tough ones in the beginning. The first one is this: if you're a believer, you can expect to be tested. That's the first expectation he gives us here: if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, you can expect to be tested, you can expect trials to come. There will be dark days. There will be bright days, as well, but they will come after the testing.

If you read all of verse 12, he says, "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." Peter doesn't go into details here in verse 12, but he says that these believers are going through a fiery ordeal, or a fiery trial, in some of your translations. The word is *pyrosis* in Greek; it means "the burning among you". We don't know what kind of burning Peter is talking about here. He is writing from Rome in this letter... Nero punished Christians by burning them at the stake; it might be a reference to that. He would actually coat believers in pitch and light them on fire, to light the walkways to his garden. He was a pretty sick person. Peter could be referring to that here or he could be referring to trials in general. As you know, fire can be very painful. It hurts to be burned, and so that's a good synonym for trials. But specifically, if you notice the context in chapter 4, this is talking about persecution.

Verse 4 says, "They malign you," or, "They slander you." That's a form of persecution. Later on, in verse 14, it mentions, "Being reviled for the name of Christ." I told you guys before, about one of our church members who was witnessing to someone in a coffee shop, and the person started screaming at them, just railing at them at the top of their voice. This is what this is referring to here. On some level, these people were being screamed at for being Christians. And when it happens, Peter says, "Don't be surprised."

That's actually an ongoing verb, which is interesting. It means, "When this happens over, and over, and over again, don't be surprised over, and over, and over again. When they shout you down, or call you names, or even come after you physically, over and over again, learn to expect it." As a matter of fact, the way he's wording this here, it's almost like you should be surprised when it doesn't happen. He even goes on, he says, "Don't act like you don't know why this is happening to you. This is why this is happening to you." He says, "It's come upon you for your testing."

That word means "a study or an investigation of something". God puts trials in your life to investigate your heart, is the idea. He puts you in the fire to study you, to see if you're the real thing or not. I've heard it said that, "Persecution purifies the church." Our numbers would probably dwindle if persecution broke out, but you would see, at the end of the day, who's in it for the right reasons.

Maybe another way to look at this is, I've heard people ask me before, "How do I know I'm a Christian? How do I know I am saved?" "Well, this is one way," Peter says, "How do you respond to persecution? How do you respond to slander?" "How can I tell I'm a believer? How do I know I'm in Christ?" This is the test. I can't think of anything worse than being picked on for being a Christian. It's the most frustrating thing, because you're standing up for Christ, you're standing up for good reasons. You would expect, at least, people would be sentimental to that. At least, they would be respectful toward it. You're not standing up for violence, and murder, and bad things. I can't think of anything harder than bearing suffering for the name of Christ. "But how you handle that," Peter says, "Determines whether you're in the faith."

I was reading up on this last week and one author said, "Suffering always comes with two things: It comes with a cause and it comes with a response." And the cause is, "Why did this happen to me?" The response is, "What do I do about it now? How do I handle it?" Well, Peter gives us both here. The cause is for your testing and the response is what he says all throughout the letter. If you want to know how you're supposed to respond to suffering or persecution, it's all throughout this letter. Just right above this, Peter says to love people, and be hospitable, and use your gifts. If you've ever been slandered, you'll know the first thing you want to do, you get grouchy at it. You get rude toward people. Peter says, "You can't be that way. You still love people in the midst of this." Earlier, in parts of the book, he tells us to be brotherly, and kind-hearted, and humble in spirit. It's hard to be humble when you're getting kicked all the time. He says to be submissive. He says, "Be submissive to the government. Be submissive to your master or your boss at work. Be submissive, wives to husbands. Husbands, love your wives, live with them in an understanding way." That's how you handle persecution. That's how you handle trials.

Martin Luther said, "You need to live... " We just sang a song for Martin Luther... But he said, "You need to live with one foot in the air and one foot on the earth." And what he meant by that is, you need to live for heaven now. Not then, but now. Charles Spurgeon said, "A man will never become great in theology, until he becomes great in suffering." And he meant the same thing, "You have to live this out." I think so many times as Christians, we have such good theology. At least, in some churches, we have good theology. And yet, the second something doesn't go our way, we act like we're pagans, and unsaved. Am I the only one? Kick the wall, kick the dog, throw something. Well, what's your theology? What does that say you believe about God? Or someone says something rude to you in the marketplace for being a Christian, and you snap right back at them, what does that say about your theology?

Some of you have heard the name Richard Wurmbrand before, but Richard Wurmbrand was a Romanian pastor who was captured and tortured by the Communists for several years, until he got out and he told the world about his experience. But in one of his books, he says they tied him to a cross and covered his body with manure. Another time, he says they threatened to punish anyone who tried to clean off an image of Christ that was defiled, and he asked his wife if he should do so, and his wife said, "I didn't marry a coward. Go and clean it off." It's pretty neat. But he said,

I've seen Christians in Communist prisons with 50 pounds of chains on their feet, tortured with red hot pokers, and down whose throats spoonfuls of salt have been forced, being afterwards kept from water, starved, whipped, and beaten, suffering from the cold, praying fervently for their jailers... You learn things about yourself in a prison that you don't learn anywhere else. You learn things about God and you can tell it's real if it lasts in a place like that. The guards can tell it too.

In the book, he went on to say that as a result of the testimony of the prisoners, many of the Communists and the guards came to faith in Christ and joined these people in the prison. But the point is, that you experience those things when you suffer. You see it in a trial. As one Romanian believer said, "The Gospel can't be spread without pain." I've had this in my head before I've tried to share Christ with someone who's lost, and I try to find every way I can do it without offending them. Does anybody else know what I'm talking about? And eventually, you get to the point, when you realize you can't. You're gonna have to say something that's gonna be offensive, and you're gonna have to say something that's gonna put you on the other side of persecution. But that's what we're called to in Christ. It's the greatest proof of our faith, is how we respond to that.

In fact, we could say it this way, if you want to tell whether your faith is real or not, pray for persecution. I'm not encouraging anybody in here to pray for persecution, but that is one way you can tell. You pray for the hard times; pray to be purified. They say when gold is purified, you put it in fire and you boil it. The interesting thing about that process, is when you put the gold in the fire, it doesn't make it gold; it's already gold. Persecution does not make you a Christian; you're already a believer through Christ, if you trust in Him. But what the persecution does, what the fire does, is it burns off the impurities. You heat it up to a liquid state; you take a spoon, and you scrape away the dross and the imperfections. God does the same thing with His church; He puts us into a liquid state, so He can scrape away the dross and get away the sin in our lives, as we

talked about earlier. And when it happens, don't be surprised. You should expect that that's one of the things the Lord does. It may not look like it did here in 1 Peter, but if you're in Christ, you will have some type of suffering and persecution.

That leads to another expectation you can have in the Christian life that goes right along with this, and that is, you can expect to share in Christ's sufferings. If you're taking notes, you can expect to be tested and you can expect to share in Christ's sufferings. You can expect to go through what He went through. You can expect to experience, on some level, what He experienced. Jesus said, "A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they'll persecute you." And as Peter is developing his argument here, he takes it a step further, and he says, "Not only does this test you, but it gives you a certain closeness or identity with Christ." The world doesn't persecute the world, not in the same way, it's different. And if you're in Christ, they're gonna treat you the way they treated Him. Peter says in verses 12 through 13, he says, "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. But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing."

I forgot to mention this earlier, but Peter starts this section off with the word "beloved". It's a word that he doesn't use very often in this letter, but it's like he's about to say something hard, and something a little edgy, and so he starts it off with a word of love toward these people. And he says, "To the degree you share in Christ's sufferings..." The sufferings of Christ here, is a reference to Jesus suffering on the cross; it's a reference to all He went through to save us and bring us into heaven. And Peter says, "To the degree or the extent that you share this, you keep on rejoicing." He doesn't mean you share in your salvation, because you don't. Christ paid it all; He did everything in full, but you can share in the pain that He went through. As one commentator said it this way, he said, "We share Christ's sufferings when we suffer for His namesake, and when the hatred that struck Him strikes us, because of Him." That's the idea here: They attack you, because you remind them of Him. The world can't get to Christ. He's seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. But they can get to you; they can get to the church.

And when that happens, he says something almost crazy, he says, "Keep on rejoicing." Why? Because it shows you that you're saved. It's one thing to be chained up in a Romanian prison, it's another thing to be praying for your guards and doing it with a smile on your face. It's one thing to be insulted in the grocery store, and called names, when you didn't do anything wrong other than just telling your faith, but it's another thing to go through all that and respond humbly and with a gentle tone in your voice. Peter says, "You're gonna go through this as a Christian, because of Christ." They're gonna say to you, "What do you mean you're a believer? That's weird. You're a fool." They're gonna say, "Why won't you drink with us? Why won't you party with us? Why don't you loot, and plunder, and kill with us like you used to?" And when that happens, you rejoice.

And I don't want to say too much about this here, other than to point out something we said earlier, say it another way. A lot of people want to share in the joy, in the peace, in the fun of being a Christian, without sharing in this, the suffering. They want to share in the fellowship, in the activities, in the closeness of the church, without sharing in the shame. And let me just tell you, it doesn't work that way, because it didn't work that way for Christ. The Lord Jesus

experienced shame, He experienced persecution, He went through dark days, He went through hard times. The Bible says, "He was a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering." It says, "He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows." It says, "He was despised and forsaken of men." And you can't follow Him, if you won't be forsaken too. You can't be His disciple, if you're not willing to be despised right along with Him. The two go hand in hand. A. W. Tozer said, "You can't have a half Christ." You can't say, "Boy, I like this heaven stuff, and I like this forgiveness stuff, and I like this mercy stuff, but all this pain and humiliation, I don't want anything to do with that." Well, then, you can't have this. They go together.

And to show you the seriousness of this Peter says, "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 exaltation." That phrase, "At the revelation of His glory," is a reference to heaven. In other words, "You don't get to go to heaven, if you don't share in this. You don't get to see the revelation of His glory, if you reject His pain." Jesus said it this way in Luke 9:26, He said, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when I come in glory." I think you should think about that passage, as He says that right below Luke 9:23, which says, "If anyone will come after me, He must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." And He goes on to say, "And if you're ashamed of what I just said, you won't have anything to do with My glory." In Matthew 10:33, He says, "Whoever denies Me before men, I will deny him before My Father who is in heaven." You need to really think very carefully about what you're gonna say, when someone comes at you for being a Christian, because if you deny Christ, this is what He says, "He will deny you before His Father who is in heaven." This is serious stuff.

And let me point out very, very carefully, that there are good things in the Christian life. I'm talking about pain and suffering here this morning, 'cause that's the context of this passage, but there is peace, and joy, and happiness in being a Christian. There is a relief that comes with having your sins forgiven. I wonder how many of you are suffering this morning simply because you have sins that are not forgiven with God, because you don't know Christ? There is a relief that comes with that, that's something out of this world, and you can have all of that. There's a fun element to Christianity, after all, we like coming to church, at least, I hope you guys like coming to church. I like coming to church. But you can't have all of that, without this as well. They go together.

As I was studying this, I came across a story of a pastor in the South (where I grew up), in North Carolina, talking about playing basketball with a guy who cursed, and swore, and bragged about all the bad things he had done. And surprisingly, the pastor started witnessing to the guy, and surprisingly, the guy said, "No, you don't need to witness to me. I'm good, because I went to youth camp when I was 13 and I prayed a prayer. And I haven't been to church in years, because it's not really cool to be a Christian, but I'm good. I'm fine." And the pastor said this, he says, "That man was not fine. Salvation does indeed happen in a moment." He said, "And once you're saved, you're always saved, but the mark of salvation, is that you maintain that posture with God throughout your life. It sticks with you forever." In other words, you persevere, like we've said. You stick with it. You don't flake back and forth. You stay with Christ; you abide with Christ. As we talked about earlier, in John 15, you remain with Him. "And if you do that," Peter says you can rejoice and experience this next thing I want to talk to you about.

And this is the final expectation we can have in the Christian life. So far these other ones have been tough to listen to, or at least, they were tough to study: testing, sharing in Christ's suffering. That sounds pretty negative. It's not very encouraging anyway, but let me end on some encouragement, 'cause this is how Peter ends this. A third expectation you can have in the Christian life, is that you can expect to be blessed. If you do all these things we're talking about, pass the test, share in Christ's suffering, Peter says, "You can expect to be blessed. God will reward you for it." You'll be rewarded with the peace of conscience, like we talked about in this life. You'll be rewarded with the fellowship of the saints, closeness with the church body. You'll be rewarded with joy, not a happy kind of sappy joy, but with the joy that stays there in the hard times. And when you die, you'll go to heaven, and be rewarded eternally there on streets of gold.

And Peter sums all this up in verse 14, and he says that, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." Peter says, "If you are reviled or insulted for the name... " Some of your translations say "reproached". That refers to all the things we've been talking about, if they call you names and slander you, if they lash out at you, whatever it looks like. If you do it for Christ, you're blessed, because the Spirit rests on you.

The Spirit of glory is another way of saying the Holy Spirit. He's pretty much saying you can tell the Spirit is inside of you if you're reviled for Christ and handle it well. And to qualify this, he says in verses 15 and 16, he says, "Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or a thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler." That word is interesting; it means "busybody". "But if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name." You see the word "glory", again, is a theme in this passage. Suffering on this earth is not very glorious, but in eternity, it is. In God's eyes, it is very glorious. He says, "If you suffer for doing the right thing," verse 15, "Not for murdering or thieving, like your fellow Galatians..." I've told you before, there's times when someone, I've heard people say, they say, "Boy, I'm being persecuted. I'm being persecuted." And then you go home, and talk to their spouse, and they've just been a total jerk all week. Peter says, "There's no glory in that." And they say, "Boy, I'm suffering for being a Christian," and then you find out, well, they just don't have any manners with anybody, shout all the time, interrupt conversations, that kind of thing. That's not what he's talking about. He's talking about suffering as a believer for the things of Christ. If you do that, it is glorious, because it shows you're saved, the real deal.

Tying all this together, going back to what we've been talking about, you can tell someone is a Christian when they persevere, when they suffer well, when the proof is in the pudding, and the real thing lasts in a storm. God does all this to test you, and try you out, and if you pass the test, you should have joy and blessing. A judge in Indiana heard that a certain villager was cast out of his wealthy family for professing Christ, so he took him to live with him in his home. And one night, they were reading the Bible, and he came across a verse in Matthew that said, "Truly, I say to you, there's no one who has left house, or brothers, or sister, or mother, or fathers, for My sake and the Gospel, who will not receive 100 times more." And the judge said to the villager, he says, "I've never done that before and I don't really know if that's true or not, but you have. You've lost everything for Christ, so tell me, is it true? Did you get 100 times more back?" And the man said, "No, I didn't. I got 1,000 times more back. I got a million times more." Do you

believe that this morning? Do you believe God will bless you in suffering? Does it cause you to rejoice? Maybe not in the moment, 'cause it shocks us. It shouldn't, but it does.

But when you go home and think about it, "Man, I was suffering for Christ, just like these people in 1 Peter, just like the people in the Book of Acts, just like all the heroes in church history." I was telling my wife this past week, I said, "I don't have a hero that didn't suffer for the faith." One of my heroes, Charles Spurgeon ... Back in Spurgeon's day, he would preach a sermon on Sunday and the newspapers would write about it on Monday. You can imagine a little pressure there. And they would say whether they liked it or not, and they would say whether they liked you or not. And they might even have cartoons making fun of you in the newspaper the next day. And Spurgeon's wife cut out pictures of him, and things that made fun of him, put them up on the mantle place, made a montage of them, put them on the mantle place, and said, "Blessed are you when people curse you for My name." Those are my heroes. Those are your heroes. Do you rejoice when you suffer and are persecuted, because it connects you with those types of men and those types of women?

Listen, friends, anybody can suffer, but Christians suffer well, and we suffer for the right reasons. Anybody can experience pain, but we do it for a higher cause and we're blessed by it. Jesus saved us. He purchased us with His blood. Our debt has been paid, our sins have been dealt with at the cross, and now, as a result of that, we can remain in Him, and be blessed. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He said, "Blessed are you when people insult you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you, because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven." Do you get the point? Heaven, heaven, heaven comes at the end of all of this pain. Do you believe that this morning? I pray that you do. Let's pray and ask the Lord for help in living this out.

Heavenly Father, this is a convicting passage because we live in a very comfortable world and we live in a place where suffering is so seldom seen by us. Suffering for us is, we don't have 15 changes of clothes or we don't have a fridge full of food. It comes as such a surprise, Lord. But You said in Your Word that we're blessed if we do it for Your namesake. Father, I pray that You would help us to suffer well. As the days do grow darker, I pray that You would build courage into Your church, not arrogance, not rudeness, but courage to stand firm for Christ. Lord, I thank you for those who are here in this room, who do stand firm for Him, for Your Son. For those who go out boldly to proclaim the Gospel, may you bless them.

And Father, if there's any here who don't know Christ, we talked about the peace that comes, the peace that transcends all understanding. We talked about joy, and happiness, and all those things. If they don't know that, because they don't know your Son, I pray you would draw them to Christ this morning. As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, may You be glorified, as we remember what Christ has done in His suffering for us, and may You be glorified in it, we pray, in Christ's name, Amen.