

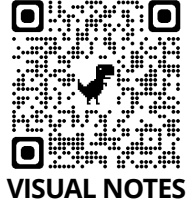
## 7: *Smiling While Suffering* (1 Peter 4:12-19)

1st century Christians often suffered, persecuted for their faith in Jesus. YET...they were **Smiling While Suffering** because they had *HOPE* in the midst of the *HURT*. How is that possible, and how can *WE* experience that kind of hope? Today we find out.

### teachingnotes

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\* Bible Translation: **NIV** (New International Version)

### **How Saints Respond to Suffering**

#### **1 Peter 4:12-14** (NIV)

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But **rejoice** inasmuch as **you participate in the sufferings of Christ**, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are **insulted because of the name of Christ**, you are blessed, for **the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you**.

Simon Peter and the 1st century followers of Jesus knew what it was like to be **insulted because of the name of Christ**, including physical beatings and be thrown in jail. Yet, they were able to **Smile While Suffering**. They *could endure the fiery ordeal* for 2 reasons. They understood that:

### **Christ Suffered = Christians Suffer**

Based on what Jesus told His disciples, it shouldn't come as a surprise when we are persecuted. Jesus told them this would happen.

**John 15:20** (NIV) Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

*WHY IS THAT?* People don't like to HEAR the TRUTH when it confronts their lifestyles. The message of Jesus = "*You have sinned against God and must turn away from sin and turn to Jesus*" is offensive to many. Further, people who live in purity are often convicted by people who DO live in purity.

- If Christians can do what is right, then others can't lean on the LIE "*I can't help myself*" to justify their actions & words. Christ Suffered and those who follow Christ will Suffer too however, there is a silver lining.

### **The Future Hope**

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There is a day coming when the present **sufferings** will fade as the the future **glory** becomes the present reality. The apostle Paul put it like this:

**Romans 8:18** (NIV) I consider that **our present sufferings** are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

### **Future Hope > Present Suffering**

- One day, pain, suffering, injustice, and death will end!
- Followers of Jesus will be with Jesus and in the presence of loved ones who follow Jesus.

## **But until that day..**

### **1 Peter 4:15-16** (NIV)

If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, **do not be ashamed**, but **praise God that you bear that Name**.

✗ If you deserve the punishment you are receiving God knows and God approves.

✓ **If you suffer as a Christian**, you can be confident that God knows your obedience to **not be ashamed of bearing the name of Jesus**. This is exactly what Peter and the other apostles did.

### **Responding to Persecution**

**Acts 5:40-42** (NIV) ...They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. **The apostles left** the Sanhedrin, **rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name**. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

② How could these men who had been hiding now stand so boldly before the same leaders they were once so afraid of?

Just before Jesus was about to be arrested, He warned His disciples that they would run away in fear, BUT...Jesus also encouraged them with these words.

**John 16:33** (CSB) I have told you these things so that **in Me you may have peace**. **You will have suffering in this world**. **Be courageous! I have conquered the world.**"

### **Pointing to The Resurrection of Jesus**

**John 16:21-22** (NIV) A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, **but I will see you again and you will rejoice**, and no one will take away your joy.

And just when the apostles thought the battle was over and their hopes were dashed (including the guy who wrote this letter) - Jesus appeared...RISEN from the dead! The world can't conquer the One who holds the keys to life and death.

And *that's* why Peter and the early Christians could **Smile While Suffering**. Those who had saw a resurrected King who gave them an eternal hope. This is also why Paul was willing to be shamed, willing to suffer, willing to die - because of the trustworthy hope that...

### **Future Hope > Present Suffering**

Paul writes it this way:

**2 Corinthians 4:8-18** (NIV) We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, because **we know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to Himself**. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. Therefore **we do not lose heart**. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet **inwardly we are being renewed day by day**. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

## **TAKE SOME NOTES HERE!**

## God's Pruning Process

### 1 Peter 4:17-18 (NIV)

For **it is time for judgment to begin with God's household**; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

**Judgment to begin with God's household** - *what's that about?*

- **God disciplines His children who aren't walking in obedience** - not to *crush* them, but to *correct* them and *train* them. If you aren't walking in disobedience, but claim Jesus as your King, don't be surprised when He calls you back to Himself by allowing tough times or the consequence of your actions to play out.
- **But what about the times we are walking in obedience?** when God allows suffering to *REFINE US*, to *PRUNE US*, so that we are molded into the image of Jesus (Rm 8:28-29) to further the Gospel message. It's during our most difficult days that we grow to seek God and surrender all. Pruning a tree brings more fruit from the tree.

🕒 Followers of Jesus going through difficult days...hang on, seek the Lord, ask brothers/sisters to walk with you through it.

✓ **The follower of Jesus can lean on the promise that...Future Glory > Present Suffering.**

✗ Those who refuse to follow Jesus should be **warned** that **Present Hope < Future Suffering**. There is a day of judgment coming, when God's justice will be handed down and an eternal hell will be the place of punishment. **Stop living for TODAY and start living for ETERNITY.** Turn from your sin and turn to Jesus. It won't be an easy road, but those traveling with you and your final destination will be worth it all!

## Trusting God Through it All

### 1 Peter 4:19 (NIV)

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

While difficult days might be a surprise to you and me, they are NOT a surprise to God. He has allowed this **according to His will**. *Where else were we gonna go?*

✓ **Commit** ourselves to our **faithful Creator** and commit to **continue to do good**. God will prune you and use you for His glory.

### How can Christians continue SMILING WHILE SUFFERING?

1) Remember that **Christ Suffered & His followers will suffer too**. Trust God to use tough times for His glory.

2) Remember that the **Future Hope > Present Suffering**. This is *NOT* heaven and these tough times won't last forever. We trust the One who resurrected from the dead, and we know that our future is with Him!

In the same way, the resurrection and ascension of Christ gives us a certain hope that our own victory has been secured.

**If you need help - call us (or seek a Christian friend and ask for their help). You aren't alone!**

## heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

\* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (850-673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon!

\* Or call our **deacons & wives**: Alan & Christy Androski (850-464-1428), Steve & Debbie Bass (850-673-7952), Tim & Joni Hughey (850-464-1156), Mark & Dot Mancil (850-253-5405), Boss & Amelia Mulkey (850-464-6717), Jim & Derita Pinkard (850-464-6188), Fain & Linda Poppell (850-464-1282), or Tom & Martha Waddail (850-973-0011).

**TAKE SOME NOTES HERE!**