

Ln 11 ... Rejoicing in Suffering

1 Peter 4:12-19

In our culture, false teachers often pervert and promote the Gospel as a means of prosperity and health. However, in this passage Peter reminds us that sometimes suffering is a part of God's will for our lives. He is encouraging his original readers and us so we will not be surprised by suffering and will persevere with the proper attitude. **Rejoicing in suffering** requires **three** attitudes.

Anticipate Suffering (4:12)

Peter writes: *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you* (4:12). The word **fiery** refers to a furnace in which gold and silver are melted down so the impurities will come to the surface for removal.

This reminds us God uses suffering as part of His spiritual refining process.

Job knew this; therefore, what does he say in [Job 23:10](#)?

Instead of thinking *the fiery trial* is *strange*, we should be surprised if suffering doesn't come. Bashing evangelical Christians has become a popular sport in America. However, we shouldn't be surprised when people misrepresent what we believe or what we say.

This is because of what warning in [2 Timothy 3:12](#)?

As someone has said, "**Christians are like teabags.** You can't tell what's inside them until they get in some hot water."

To rejoice in suffering, **anticipate suffering** and ...

Celebrate Suffering (4:13-14)

Peter continues: *But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings* (4:13a). Peter doesn't tell us to "enjoy" our suffering; he says *rejoice* in it. Enjoying means we take pleasure from something. Rejoicing means we choose not to let suffering steal the inner joy of knowing God has a purpose for allowing it. When we suffer for living by God's Word, we *are partakers of Christ's sufferings*.

The word translated "**partakers**" (*koinōneō*, coin-oh-neh'-oh), means "fellowship" or "partners." When we suffer for obeying God's Word, we deepen our fellowship with the Lord.

Going through suffering with someone bonds you to that person. Just ask any war veteran. Many veterans have reunions forty and fifty years after the war in which they fought together. When we suffer for standing for God's Word, we get closer to Jesus. That should cause us to *rejoice*.

Peter continues: *that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy* (4:13b).

Our present suffering for Christ's sake is similar to a pregnant woman anticipating her baby while having

birth pains. After she gives birth, her suffering is replaced with the joy of a new baby. In the same way, the future hope of *his glory* should cause us to *be glad* in our present suffering.

How does [Romans 8:17c](#) remind us of this?

We can also celebrate because suffering for Christ brings **supernatural strength**. Peter puts it like this: *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you* ([4:14](#)).

The word **reproached** means verbally abused or slandered.

Not only can we rejoice when Christ returns, but also because His glorious Spirit is on us, giving us power, love, and a sound mind ([2 Tim. 1:7](#)).

To rejoice in suffering, **anticipate** and **celebrate suffering**, but also ...

Evaluate Suffering (4:15-19)

Not all suffering results in blessing ([2:20](#)). Therefore, Peter writes: *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters* ([4:15](#)). This means we should evaluate ourselves to make sure our suffering is for Christ's sake, not our own sin.

So, let's take a little test to make sure we are not suffering for the wrong reason.

Most of us would quickly say, "I'm not a *murderer*." But wait a minute. Jesus said: *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment* ([Mt 5:21](#)).

Then, what does our Lord Jesus say in [Matthew 5:22a](#)?

This means being angry with someone is committing murder in our hearts.

Murder is the outward act of what is in a person's heart.

Or, have you ever suffered for being a *thief*? For example, an employee may be demoted or fired for habitually coming in late, leaving early, taking too long at breaks, or doing shoddy work. That is not suffering for Christ! That is suffering for being a *thief* because not giving a day's work for a day's pay is stealing.

An **evildoer** refers to someone who commits any kind of crime.

The word translated **busybody** implies being "an agitator" who disrupts peace and harmony in a family, business, church, or community.

It is basically being a troublemaker by way of gossip, which the Bible calls being a **whisperer**.

What does [Proverbs 16:28](#) say about such a person?

We should always **evaluate** our suffering to see if we have done anything to warrant it. On the other hand, Peter writes: *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed* ([4:16a-b](#)). We should be *ashamed* if we suffer for doing wrong, but we should *not be ashamed* when we suffer for living up to the name *Christian*.

How many times does the name *Christian* occur in the Bible? In this passage and only two other times ([Acts 11:26](#); [26:28](#)). The early believers were called *disciples*, *brethren*, and five times in the book of Acts followers of the way ([9:2](#); [19:9](#), [23](#); [24:14](#), [22](#)). Originally, the name *Christian* was an insult. It meant you were a follower of an uneducated, Jewish carpenter who had been crucified.

However, Peter tells us to *glorify God on this behalf* ([4:16c](#)). This means we should bear the name *Christian* as a badge of honor because it means we are proud to be followers of Christ.

What does Jesus say about those who are *ashamed* of Him and His words ([Mark 8:38b](#))?

Do you want Jesus to *be ashamed* of you? Then never *be ashamed* to tell anyone you are *Christian*. Say it proudly!

Our sufferings as Christians are nothing compared to the sufferings unbelievers will experience one day. Peter puts it like this: *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?* ([4:17](#)).

Peter is talking about the time of the two kinds of suffering.

First is the suffering of *the house of God*, or of Christians. Though God disciplines and refines us now through suffering, the future *judgment* on unbelievers will be infinitely worse. Jesus said at the end of the age the angels will come to *sever the wicked from among the just* ([Mt 13:49](#)).

Then, what does Jesus say the angels will do with unbelievers ([13:50](#))?

We can endure suffering with joy, knowing it is refining and preparing us for eternal glory. The alternative to living for Jesus is to later experience infinitely worse eternal suffering.

This should cause us to do everything we can to reach our lost relatives, friends, neighbors, and associates for Christ.

As someone has said, "I don't know how people who claim to love Jesus can act like they care so little about those who don't know Him."

In verse eighteen, Peter quotes [Proverbs 11:31](#): *And if the righteous scarcely be saved.*

The word translated **scarcely** (*molis*, mol'-is) means "with difficulty."

It refers to the difficulties and sufferings we experience as believers.

That's why Jesus tells us to count *the cost* ([Lk 14:28](#)).

If God allows believers to suffer and have difficulties in this life, *where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* ([4:18b](#)). In other words, how much more severely will God deal with those who reject Christ? In comparison, our present sufferings fade into oblivion. Peter sums it all up by writing: *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator* ([4:19](#)).

When we *suffer according to the will of God*, we can rejoice that our suffering has a divine purpose and goal, as well as a glorious end.

The word translated **commit** means to give something to someone for safekeeping.

It is the very same Greek word Jesus used on the cross when He loudly cried out what words ([Luke 23:46b](#))?

That verse is a quote from [Psalm 31:5](#). Many Jews would pray this prayer before going to sleep at night. The worst thing anyone can do to us is kill us, as they did Jesus. However, death simply delivers us into our heavenly Father's *hands*. Therefore, **evaluate suffering** in that context.

To be able to rejoice in your suffering,

ANTICIPATE,

CELEBRATE, AND

EVALUATE YOUR SUFFERING.