

**1 Peter 4:12-19**  
**Concerning Your Fiery Trial**  
**J.D. Farag**

We're in 1 Peter and Lord willing, we will complete Chapter 4 today. Our text will be *verses 12-19* to the end of the chapter.

So we're just going to get right to it if you don't mind. If you're able ask you to stand, and you can follow along as I read. If not, where you're seated is just fine. Picking it up in *verse 12*, the Apostle Peter writes, "**Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial [Or fiery trial as some of your translations render it] you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.**

**But rejoice [Verse 13] that you may participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted [Verse 14] because of the name of Christ, you are blessed,** [I'm going to have to work through that one. We'll talk about it. But here's why] **for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.**

**If you suffer, [Verse 15] 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. For it is time [Verse 17] 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?**

**[And Verse 18] If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" So then, [Verse 19] those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."**

Let's pray; if you would, please join with me. Father in Heaven thank You so much. Oh, Lord, this is our time together with You, with each other in Your word. It's a time that we just have to worship and fellowship.

So now Lord, as we have our Bibles open and our hearts open and our eyes and ears open, we just want to consecrate ourselves to You. We want to give You our undivided attention. And we do so with great anticipation that You're going to speak very clearly into our lives, very personally if need be, especially for those who are really struggling right now and hurting and really going through it in the midst of that fiery trial. And it does seem strange, and it doesn't make sense.

And Lord, I just thank You for inspiring the Apostle Peter to pen these words for us some well-nigh 2000 years later. It's a word fitly spoken.

So Lord would You now as only You can and are always faithful to, just get our attention. And then once you get our attention keep and hold our attention, so our minds don't wander because I don't think there's a one of us here or watch an online that wants to miss anything that You have for us. So Lord, this is our time, and we're looking forward to You speaking. So Lord, speak, Your servants are listening, we pray in Jesus' name amen and amen.

You can be seated. Thank you.

So I want to talk with you today about those fiery trials in our lives, but specifically how it is that we're to view them, and what it is that we're to think about them. In the text before us today, the Apostle Peter by the Holy Spirit is seeking to encourage us now as he was encouraging them then. And the encouragement is to consider your trials, consider some things about your trials.

Let's maybe step back. You're in the heat of it, you're in the midst of it. It's hard to maintain a proper perspective when you're going through a trial. We're all prone to lose perspective. And like Peter writes, and we'll talk about, we kind of misunderstand it. We start seeing it and thinking about

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it as being strange. We start fancying ourselves as somehow being singled out going through this trial like maybe it's me, something I've done. God's mad at me. What's going on? Why is God allowing this? I mean, the questions are seemingly endless, and the enemy's right there to provide you with an endless list of questions.

So thankfully, the Lord, through Peter, is going to have us revisit how it is, the lens in which we view our trials from and with. And I found seven; you might find more but I think all of us would do well to consider them especially when adversity strikes, and adversity strikes.

And when the fiery trials hit, and the fiery trials hit. So with the help of the Holy Spirit, I'm hoping that today we'll all be encouraged as it relates to the trials in our lives. The first one is in *verses 12-13* and I know you know where I'm going with this. But just hang in there with me. I'm wording it this way for a reason. Let's just consider this: That that fiery trial can still be pure joy [Keyword "still"].

Now this is interesting for a number of reasons chief of which is that Peter knew a thing or two about this, right? For him to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and write, Don't think it's weird, don't think it strange when you're in the midst of a fiery trials. Don't do what I did because that's what I did.

Well, what you mean Peter? Oh, so many times; in fact there was one time when I was with the Savior and we're in the garden. And He told them can you just pray; I'm going to go off. Just pray and watch and I'll be back. And Peter remembers this very well because he fell asleep. We talked about that, and I don't want to read too much into it, but I do think he had a sleeping disorder.

But anyway, he didn't pray; he slept. And then Jesus comes back, He finds them sleeping. He's not mad at them. He's just asking them why couldn't you stay awake for just an hour and pray?

But the trial of that time because it would be shortly after that, that Peter would deny Jesus three times. And when he was in the midst of this test, this trial, this fiery trial and he suffered greatly because of it, it seemed strange to him. It didn't make sense to him. It would explain why it is that when they came to arrest Jesus – leave it to Peter.

I love Peter by the way. There's going to be a lot of people that are standing in line to apologize to Peter for being — I will be in that line, I have to admit. He's been the object of many sermon illustrations, sadly. But this is an amazing man. This is an amazing man.

But here he is. They are coming to arrest Jesus. What does he do? I mean this is brave, courageous. He takes his sword and cuts off the ear of this guy by the name of Malchus. And Jesus is like — I know this is a very loose paraphrase, but Jesus is looking at Peter going, "What are you doing?" Oh, no need to fear, Peter is here! And here I am to save the day!

[ Laughter ]

Peter, put that thing away. You're trying to — I know this does not make sense. This seems very strange to you. You think it strange that this is happening. It's not strange. And you're coming to my defense, but this is a spiritual battle you're trying to fight with carnal weaponry. What's going on here, Peter, I know it seems strange to you, but this must happen. And so man, I would've loved to have been there. He just heals Malchus' ear.

Here's what I'm thinking. If I'm Malchus, I'm getting saved like right there. You are the Savior, the Son of God! Thank You for my ear back. Your disciple, wow, keep him away from me please! I think we're going to see Malchus in Heaven. I am just suggesting.

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What's my point. Maybe you are asking do I actually even have a point? Yes, I do.

Would you agree that Peter would earn the right to write, inspired by the Holy Spirit, about rejoicing in the midst of a fiery trial? Oh, the many trials. And not only the suffering in those fiery trials but being witness to the suffering of the Savior of the world. He witnessed it firsthand!

And it was so hard for him. He couldn't wrap his mind around it. He's actually fighting against it. Which explains, not excuses, what he did when he did that. But again, back to the question of would you agree that Peter has had the right to speak into our lives by the Holy Spirit in this regard? Yes, he does.

He's suffered greatly. He witnessed firsthand the suffering of the Savior of the world. And I want to hear from a guy like that. Because he can tell me something. He's earned the right to tell me a thing or two about fiery trials.

You can rejoice. You can still consider this and view this and see this as an opportunity to rejoice. **"Consider it pure joy,"** James. Remember this? How can you forget. I think we spent a whole week on this passage, *verses 2-4*. Would you just kindly indulge me? I want to read it. I think it is apropos and germane to our understanding. James writing says, **"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds."**

And he doesn't stop there, thankfully, because if he did that would be cruel. It's like buck up, be happy. Really? Can you explain to me how it's even possible to consider it pure joy, not just joy, pure joy?

And this is what Peter is echoing. You can rejoice and be joyful, "consider it pure joy" in the midst of that fiery trial, and here's why, *verse 3*, **"Because you know [Not hope, wish, think] you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance."**

Oh, that's right. I remember praying and asking God for perseverance. Had I known He was going to answer that prayer this way, I would not have prayed for perseverance. You prayed, you asked Me for perseverance, so I said okay, here's the trial. Well, no, can't you just give me perseverance without the trial? No.

The only way you're going to get perseverance is going through the trial. So wait a minute. You're telling me [*Verse 4*] that **"Perseverance must finish its work so that I may be mature and complete, not lacking anything?"**

You know with the inference is here, right? That we don't let it finish. We fight against it. No, it has to finish. Let God finish doing what He's doing. What's God doing? Oh, He's developing the perseverance you asked Him for in and through the trial.

Okay, *1 Corinthians 10:13*. Again, just bear with me here. We quote this — well, talk about paraphrasing loosely — I mean you've heard it said, perhaps you, yourself have said, God will never give you more than you can handle. Is it just me, or is it hard when you're going through a trial to warm up to somebody saying that to you, and everything for them is just going smashingly well? God will never give you more than you can handle.

[ Laughter ]

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Whatever. You don't think I know that? Easy for you to say. Just remind me when you're going through a trial, I'm going to come up to you and say God won't give you more than you can handle.

It's a loose paraphrase of *1 Corinthians 10:13*. I sure hope I'm getting this right. It goes like this. The Apostle Paul: God will not try you/tempt you, [*Same word in the original*] above that which you are able. But with the trial, He will provide a way of escape so that you can bear up under it.

Did you get that? How do we come up with God won't give you more than you can handle? That's quite the abbreviation. You left a couple of things out. Like for example it's very specific that it's in and through that trial that God gives you the ability to bear up under that trial by providing in and through that trial the way of escape. It comes vis-à-vis the trial.

See, if you're anything like me, and I suspect that you are because were all dirty rotten sinners, I want it now, in advance, going into the trial. I've got it in my hip pocket. Okay, I've got the perseverance. Bring it on; let's go, let's do this. So the trial hits. I'm going to pull out the perseverance now because God already gave it to me.

Well, how's that working out for you? First of all, God does not give you tomorrow's manna today. He'll give you whatever you need at the time you need it exactly what you need at the time you need it. So the trial hits, adversity strikes.

Let God do what He's doing, and as God does it, here you are in the midst of it, and you're going, oh!

God, this has to be You because I mean, by any stretch of the imagination, I shouldn't be doing as well as I am. In fact, I'm actually rejoicing and thanking You for this trial.

Have you ever thanked God for a trial? Not necessarily when you are in the midst of it, but man, I look back, certainly in retrospect, on those really fiery trials in my life and it's kind of like God, I would never want to have to go through that again but thank You so much for what You did in that because had it not been for that, You would not have given to me that which I needed. I lack nothing now. I've matured. I have grown. I've developed perseverance. This is a testing. You strengthened me.

You know how many times have we prayed, "Oh, God, give me strength." Oh, are you sure you want Me to answer that prayer? Because now I'm going to allow something in your life to give you the strength you're asking Me for.

So before we move on, here's the take away. Revisit that trial you're in and step back and see it as a good thing and a God thing. And see it and view it through the lens of what God is doing.

You know sometimes, and we're all guilty of this, we're in the midst of the trial, and we're just so laser focused on the trial. And I can almost imagine God going, hello? Do you know what I'm doing? Do you know the good that I'm bringing out of this?

Okay, one last thing. I know I said just one more thing, but this, I think this is the Holy Spirit. Have you ever, I'll speak for myself; I've done this more times than I care to admit, where you've gotten through a trial – better said, God gets you through the trial and you are on the tail end of the trial, and you look back on the trial and you think man, if I'd have known now what — I mean if I'd have known then what I know now, I wouldn't have fought and kicked and bitten and scratched and screamed and complained.

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You mean to tell me throughout this whole thing I could've actually had joy? I was stressed out of my mind unnecessarily because God had it all worked out. And here I am freaking out.

You robbed yourself of the joy that could have been yours in the midst of the trial. And listen, when you're in the midst of a trial, the one thing you could really use is joy, right? But fear. The worrying, the fretting. I've come out of trials, looked back on the trial, and I've actually asked God to forgive me. And it's like the Lord's saying, well, I forgive you, but don't you wish you would've had joy?

Yeah, that was an especially long trial. I really — I could've had joy through the whole thing.

How could you have had joy in the midst of that trial as hard, as painful as it was? The pain and the suffering were just horrendous. How could you have had joy in the midst of that?

Because I now know what God was doing in and through that. I call it the after/before or the after/during. And what I mean by that is when you focus not on the trial but on what God's doing and the after because trials have an "after." It came to pass. Not it came to stay.

Aren't you glad? It comes to pass. Bye-bye. See ya. Thank you so much. You overstayed your welcome, but that's okay. Long trial.

But you're looking at this thing going man, you know here I was so worried about something that never even happened. I was so fearful. And that's the thing about fear. It fast forwards you down as far as you'll let fear take you down the road imagining the most horrific of scenarios.

Oh, we are so good at that. It's called the "what if." Oh, what if that happens? And then the enemy is right there popping the popcorn and streaming the video of your fear. It's a horror movie, by the way. And oh, if that happens, then what if this happens and then if that happens, that could happen. The next thing you're like, oh, God!

And God is going, what are you doing? That whole time that you are freaking out I had it worked out, and I had for the asking, at the ready joy that you did not avail yourself of. How many nights, sleepless nights unnecessarily? I could've actually slept instead of tossed and turned. God's got this, man. I know He does because He told me. He's told me already in advance. That's the after/before/and during. The after of the trial. You know when you've got 20/20 vision, as they say hindsight.

And now you're looking at this thing hindsight, perfect vision. It's all clear now. I wish I would've not fought God so hard during that trial. I could have actually had joy. I need more joy in my life. It's not the joy of the Lord, *Nehemiah 8:10*, the strength of the Lord? **"The joy the Lord is our strength."** Oh, no wonder.

Well, I'm going to get ahead of myself. *Verse 14* is our second one. Just consider this about your trial. Do you see it is a badge of honor? It is. Here again, Peter knew first-hand. You have to understand that Peter was there for every sermon. He didn't skip any sermon. You know, kind of like what we do. We would skip one. Yeah, I didn't make it.

No, Peter was there every single time. He heard every single sermon. He was there close in proximity to Jesus, heard every word of Jesus. So how about those sermons that He preached? How about the one that is the most well-known. We effectually refer to it as the sermon on the mount. Now can you just use your God-given imagination and picture yourself there when Jesus preached this sermon?

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And He gets to the part in the sermon — this is not the best part. The best part of my sermons I've been told is when they end. That's the best... when you end. What blessed you about the teaching? When you ended it. Anyway, this was not the best part of the sermon.

In fact, this was probably the hardest part of the sermon when Jesus goes into this whole thing about, you know, when people insult you, rejoice.

What? They just insulted me!

No, it's a badge of honor. You should not be concerned. Consider it as a badge of honor. In fact, you know when you should be concerned is when they don't.

No, watch this. You better be very concerned and beware when all men speak well of you. We'll talk more about that in a moment. Not that I want to be insulted. It's been said that if you're going to be a pastor, you better have the heart of a child, the mind of a scholar, and the hide of a rhinoceros. You have to have thick skin, or you won't last very long. But is not that I want to be insulted, but it's a litmus test for me when I'm insulted and persecuted because it tells me that I've aroused the ire of the enemy. So that's a good thing.

When I should really be concerned is when the enemy just leaves me alone, doesn't prompt somebody to send you one of those e-mails. You know what I'm talking about? And when you should worry is when instead of getting that kind of an e-mail or being on the receiving end of this kind of an insult, the enemy sends you a thank you card. Then you should be very concerned.

Keep up the good work, JD, for the powers of darkness. You pose absolutely no threat to my kingdom. In fact, here's a gift card and flowers will be delivered for your wife. Thank you so much. That's when you should really be concerned. Again, we will talk about this more in a moment.

It's this a third one I want to spend a little bit of time on because in *verse 15*, Peter is delineating between suffering for righteousness or suffering for unrighteousness. In other words, the consequences of your unrighteousness is the source of your suffering. So in other words, there's two kinds of suffering. There's the trials that come as a result of unrighteousness. They are the consequences. But then there's also suffering for the sake of righteousness.

And so he's delineating between that. And it's my belief that God inspired Peter to delineate between the two so that we'll stop, and not just consider, but reconsider.

*Ecclesiastes 7:14*, Solomon writes, "**During times of prosperity enjoy but...**"

You know trouble is coming when you see a word like that. "**When adversity strikes**" -I wish it didn't say "when." I wish it said, "if by chance adversity were to strike." No, "when;" look it up in the original. Maybe it's not so harsh and definite. It's worse, "when," guaranteed or your money back. When adversity strikes.

So you've got now this delineation between prosperity: enjoy. Adversity: consider. Because isn't it true when times are good and things are going well, we're not very introspective. And it shows up in our prayer life, right? I mean our prayers are very benign and nebulous and inconsequential. Lord, blessed me, bless them, bless this, in Jesus' name amen. And off you go.

But then when adversity strikes, oh, God! God! Creator of the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that in them is.

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Oh, now I've got your attention.

It's when adversity strikes. That's why, and we see it in Scripture, prosperity is more dangerous than adversity because prosperity has this way of lullabying you into a spiritual slumber, and it does that because you begin to think wrongly, that it's always going to be good which is why God allows adversity and why inspired Solomon to continue, *Ecclesiastes 7:14*, "**During times of prosperity, enjoy but when adversity strikes, consider that God has brought the one alongside the other.**"

He's allowed them both for this purpose so that you will not take for granted the future. No man can discover anything about his future. In other words, God's going to allow the adversity alongside the prosperity because it's the only thing that will get us to stop and consider that which we would not otherwise stop and consider.

So now I'm looking at this thing, and I'm starting to ask questions that I need to be asking. Why is it that you're allowing this? What is it that You want me to see in this? What is it that You want to show me that You could not otherwise show me had it not been for the adversity that You've allowed to strike in my life, the fiery trial that You've allowed to hit?

Oh, I'm glad you asked. I need you to consider a few things that when things are just going so well you're not going to take the time to stop and consider and contemplate and inquire. When adversity strikes, you will.

The first thing to consider or maybe even reconsider is: Am I suffering because of my own sin? Am I suffering these consequences, am I in this fiery trial of my own making? Because of something I did or said? These are the consequences because of it.

And Peter, to his credit by the Holy Spirit lists some examples: Murder. Well, I'm fine there. I've never murdered anybody.

Ah, not so fast. Jesus said if you hate your brother, you've committed murder in your heart. So you're not off the hook. Stealing, wickedness, sexual immorality, any kind of other criminal act, and then he has the audacity — you would almost think it's not supposed to be here in this list —but he brings up gossiping.

Okay, we need to talk about this. I don't want to, but we need to. Why? Let's ask, let's consider this question: Why would Peter be inspired by the Holy Spirit to include something like gossiping in the same list as murder? Does gossiping rise to that level? Yes, and even more and I'll explain.

Gossiping is deadly dangerous. You'll kill someone with that tongue. In fact, it's almost worse because if you gossip and spread discord and you know, the criticisms and the complaints and the questioning and the accusing and the gossiping and the rumors. All it takes is one little spark that sets the whole forest on fire.

James again says with a little rudder we can control this large, enormous ocean liner. With the training of a large beast, we can control them, but we cannot control this thing, this tongue. And how deadly is its poison. So here's how it works. You say to somebody, "Did you hear about so-and-so?"

"No, what?"

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The proverb says that's delicious. Our flesh, our human nature just craves this. Like no, what are the juicy details? And they just go off and start talking stink about that person.

By the way, parenthetically let me say if someone is talking stink about someone else to you behind their back, I promise you they are talking stink to someone else about you behind your back. Am I right?

Man was somebody start talking stink about — first of all I'm more than happy to share with you what I do. Nobody does that because everybody's on their best behavior around the pastor. Oh, pastor I fasted and prayed between breakfast and lunch. I'm reading the Book of Numbers.

[Laughter]

Really? Give me a break. But if anybody were to come to me — I guess this is a hypothetical —, and they were to say something like — oh, they always counted in such a Christianese — hey, we need to pray for so-and-so. What? There you go. So when somebody comes to me and says, "Hey, did you hear about so-and-so?" I'm like, "Stop right there. Have you talked to them?"

And by the way, instead of gossiping about them, I have an idea. Why don't you pray for them? Instead of being so critical of them, I got an idea. Why don't you pray for them? Shame on you! Shame on you!

The complaining, the murmuring; you want to ask the Israelites about that? Do you think God took that seriously? They're complaining against Moses and Aaron, his cousin, Moses' cousin, Korah. Numbers 16, one of my favorite accounts. It's a gnarly, man. Here's Korah going like, recruits, there's always recruiting. He's got about 250 guys now on his side against Moses. And they rise up in this coup and Korah wants to take Moses' position, and he challenges Moses. They've been talking stink about him for how many months now? Finally they come to Moses, and say Moses, you take on too much for yourself. Has God not called us, and does not God use us too? Who do you think you are, like you're all that?

And here's Moses, right? The meekest man who ever walked the face of the earth. If I'm not mistaken, when God called him from the burning bush, how freaky would that be, by the way? And you know, take off your sandals, you're on holy ground. And I'm going to use you to be the deliverer of My people.

This is after 40 years in the backside of the desert, not just the desert, but the backside of the desert. He's 80 years old! And God comes to him out of the burning bush and says yo, Mo — I'm sorry. I'm going to use you.

And Moses is like you pulled the wrong file, man! I've been here so long I've developed this speech impediment. I've been talking to sheep for so long I can't even talk anymore. God says no, you're not getting out of it.

That's fine, have your older brother Aaron speak. That is why throughout the Old Testament God commanded Moses to have Aaron speak to the people. Here's a take away. You can make excuses, but you're not getting out of it. When God calls you, God calls you. So here goes, Mo. He never wanted it. In fact, he fought tooth and nail to get out of it.

And finally, he goes, reluctantly. And he never wanted it. He would have been — I believe if God had given him the green light, he would've been more than happy to say here, go ahead! Here, here's



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the keys to my office. It's all yours now. Whoa! See ya, wouldn't want to be ya. You can deal with all the complaining and the murmuring, all the insults, and all the gossiping.

So here's Korah, he's like Moses, God's called us. You're no better than us.

I never said I was.

So what does Moses do? He says okay, let's let God decide. I'm very open. You know if God's going to choose you over me, then aloha! It's all yours. No problem. In fact, that would be a great relief for me.

So Moses said let's meet at the Tabernacle, the tent of meeting first thing in the morning, bright and early. Why don't you come, I'll be there and we'll just let God decide.

So I love this, man. Number 16 — Numbers, the Book of Numbers. People think of the Book of Numbers, and they think boring! Anything but! What a book! Remember we went through that book? Whatever, 15 years ago now? Man, what a book.

Anyway, so next morning here's Moses, there's Aaron, they're in the tabernacle, tent of meeting, and here comes Korah with all of his recruited elders, 250 guys. Okay, Mo, let's settle this right here, right now.

Moses is like okay, Lord, what do You want to do here? He didn't have to wait long. God opened up the earth and it swallowed them alive and killed them. Oh, I guess you still want to use me, Moses would say.

And it gets worse, by the way. If I Moses, I would've seized that opportunity and said something like does anybody else what my job? This would be a good time to say something. Speak now or forever hold Your peace. No, we are good. Love you, bro, Mo, yo!

So... but Moses doesn't do that thankfully. So what happens after that? The people that didn't get swallowed up in the earth, they start complaining against Moses. How could you let this happen? Why would God do this? This is your fault. Moses — if I Moses, I'm like, "What is wrong with you people?"

The father, the son, and the donkey? Okay, I'm going to share it real quick. Bear with me. The father and the son have a donkey and they go into town to get supplies. Dad says son, why don't you ride the donkey. I'll walk. They pull into the town and the town's people start complaining and criticizing, accusing, gossiping. Look at that slave driver of — no, the son — look at that, that lazy, no good, entitled son who rides the donkey and makes his poor, ailing father walk next to him. Shame on him!

So they catch wind of it. Dad says okay, son, next time we go into town, I'll ride the donkey. You can walk. So they pull into town. Sure enough there goes the gossiping. [Whispering] look at that slave driving father! He rides the donkey and makes his son walk. Shame on him. So they catch wind of it. Dad says okay, son, I've got it. We'll both ride the donkey, okay? So they pull into town. What happens? Gossiping.

That poor donkey. They're going to break the back, both riding that donkey, shame on them! Dad's like okay, whatever... neither of us are going to ride the donkey. So they going into town. They're

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both walking with the donkey. They pull into town. You would think that would satiate the gossiping and stop the complaining. No. What happens?

Here comes the gossiping. They pull into town. Look at those stupid idiots. They have a donkey, and they don't ride it. That's the Israelites! That's the church. I said it because it's true. We do that.

I mean, it is satanic, I'm sorry. It is an insatiable, satanic accusation and gossiping, and confusion and discord, which God hates, by the way. And it's so destructive. You can destroy a church; you can destroy a pastor. You can destroy a family. You can destroy a marriage because see here's what happens.

Like the Israelites after Korah, then God just starts torching them. See I like chapters like that. That's called a deterrent. And then what did Moses and Aaron do? I would have never done this. They started interceding on behalf of these other Israelites that are complaining about what God just did to Korah and the 250. And Moses and Aaron intercede on their behalf. Please God be merciful. See I would've just said — never mind.

[Laughter]

You would have too so don't be all spiritual. It's kind of like well, this is pretty cool. Burn, baby burn, but anyway..., but they didn't. And then God stopped.

Why?

Because it's contagious. Complaining is contagious. It's not just destructive, it's contagious. Because now you start talking stink about somebody the next thing you know somebody else is talking stink about them. And they don't even know them. They don't even know them.

Did you hear about Brother so-and-so?

Oh, you know him? No, I just heard that Brother so-and-so said something about Brother so-and-so, and so I was just telling you about brother so-and-so.

Stop! Stop. Don't say another word. You go directly to them. You pray for them. You don't talk stink about them. You're going to destroy yourself, by the way. It will not end well for you.

I think about that verse in Hebrews, when we were studying through Hebrews about those that have been given the oversight over you, make their oversight as leaders a joy. Don't be a burden on them because that's not going to be for your benefit. In other words, you're going to be the recipient of the very thing that you're doing. You're bringing it on yourself. You're tearing yourself down.

You want to tear your church down, you're brother down? They're your sibling in Christ. They're part of the body. It's like cannibalizing your own body in the spiritual sense. You're tearing yourself down and not to mention what it does in terms of the mind. When your mind is thinking about those things and saying those things.

Okay, real quick so man, we got four more to go? How are we doing here? Don't look at your watches. I'll have you out of here for dinner.

[Laughter]

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Just real quick. So somebody's come to you, and you let them, and they just talked stink about so-and-so. And so you come to church the next week and who should happen to walk in but so-and-so. And then they sit next to you. You're like, the nerve of them!

You know what's happened, don't you? You will never see them the same again because they are guilty until proven innocent. And even if proven innocent, they're still guilty in your mind. That's how insidious and dangerous it is.

And sometimes God needs to get our attention on these things and say you know, your suffering because of that. That's the consequences of your poisonous, vicious, slandering, gossiping tongue. You're reaping what you've sown. You wonder why nobody wants to be around you? That's why.

You know why you're suffering loneliness? Who wants to be around you? You're a slanderer. You're a gossip. And who wants to be around that? I want to be around somebody that's going to be encouraging and edifying and somebody that's going to say hey, man, I know you're going through it. I just want you to know I love you, man. I kind of like you too, believe it or not.

You do?

Yeah, I like you.

Well, I don't think anybody likes me.

No, I like you. I feel bad for you, man. I just want to encourage you. Can I pray for you?

Oh! [Crying]

That's who I want to be around. You see them coming and you go towards them. You see a gossip coming — and you go the other way. Don't let them see me. Oh, no, they saw me!

Okay, number 4, verse 16. This is good. Your suffering because of Jesus. Here, Peter turns this corner, comes back to suffering as Christians for righteousness, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our association with Jesus Christ. He says you be encouraged. Don't be ashamed. Don't hold your head down. Don't be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Don't deny Him, or like Peter, say you didn't know Him. Again, Peter knew a thing or two about this, right?

No, you're called by that name. Are you ashamed of His name? The name of Jesus, the only name given among men whereby we must be saved. Are you one thing around certain people, and another thing around God's people because you're embarrassed or ashamed to be associated with Jesus? You know in *John's Gospel, the 15th Chapter*, pardon me, beginning in verse 18, this is Jesus speaking now. He says, "**If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.**"

Oh, okay. I was starting to take it personally. No, is not you. It's Me. It's your association with Me because you bear My name, and you're, I guess, guilty by association as they say in the sanctified sense.

Let's keep moving. Pretty good now. I'm making up for lost time, verse 17 and this is a biggie. They're all biggies. But trials purify us, right? Now this is kind of difficult. It's often quoted but I think often misunderstood when Peter says that, "Judgment begins in the house of God."

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It is like oh, judgment — oh, preacher's love this verse; they are all over it. Judgment begins in the house of God! And you are like no! That's not really what he's saying here. What he's saying is that the fiery trial of God's judgment starts with God's people, but it doesn't end there.

So this is a fire that purifies. And it's going to start the purification process of God's people begins in the family of God, the church of Jesus Christ. God's going to start there, but it doesn't end there. Well, where does it end? Listen, you don't want to be anywhere near the world when God's judgment comes to an end because for us, it's a purifying fire. For the world, it's a consuming fire. So got the wood, hay, and stubble, and you've got the precious stone, the gold and the silver. The same fire consumes, purifies, makes more valuable.

Even Peter talks about it, others as well, that our faith is like that goldsmith. It's gold. It's subjected to this intense fire so that all of the impurities come to the top and then the goldsmith scrapes the dross off the gold. And he knows he has pure gold when he can see his image reflected in that gold. But it has to be subjected to that purification process in that fiery trial.

Would you, with me, revisit your trial this way? Not see it as a bad thing? This is a good thing. God's purifying me. By the way, He's also making me more like Jesus. And if I'm not mistaken, I think I prayed that too unknowing, that when you pray to be just like Jesus well, then here comes the conforming, purifying, breaking, shaping, making, molding.

It's in *Romans 8:29* after our favorite verse in all of the Bible, *Romans 8:28*, right? **"For we know that God works all things together for the good."** And we can all quote that in any accent or dialect you want. Translation — we know it so well. But what is the purpose? What does it mean to be called according to God's purpose, to love God?

The purpose is to make you more like Jesus, make you more Christlike, pure, holy, meek, patient. That's a tough one. Kind? Isn't it true that when we go through pain, and suffering, it gives us more compassion for people who are going through a difficult time?

I forget who it was that said it, but it's so good. It goes something like this: "If people only knew what others are going through, they would be kinder." Wow! Man, that gets me. That just changes the whole complexion of it. I will never see it that way again. Now I see it as oh, wow, Lord, so be it Lord, so be it!

Number 6, *verse 18*, it brings salvation. Here, Peter is recalling another sermon when Jesus said that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. So he — and it's just the Holy Spirit and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit because he quotes and cites this notion of man being saved in and of himself. It's impossible.

But with God, nothing is too hard or impossible. In other words, that trial may come to bring about your salvation. Well, you say I'm already saved. Oh, what about them then?

Who? Who are we talking about?

Oh, you know the person that is watching you go through that trial. And their waiting with bated breath to see how you're going to fare in that trial. And they're rooting for you, by the way. They're not a believer, but they're watching you as a believer and they want to see you get through that trial because if you get through, and God will get you through that trial — and they don't not only want to

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see God get you to that trial, they want to see how you do, which — find somebody else because I blow it so bad all the time.

Because they're watching me going — great I'm the example of how God gets you through a trial and how I behave, and that's me over there in the fetal position on the floor screaming and gnashing my teeth — God!

Look at them. They might fare better. But they want to see how God's going to do it, and they want to see how you're going to do when God does it.

Because see, when God — and He will — that's when the "when" word works on the other side. When God gets you through it, those that are watching your life are going to say wow, I want me some of that!

Do you know how many people have come to Christ watching a Christian go through a fiery life trial and come out the other side stronger, purer, better? Only God can do that. I want that. They're looking for the Christian to be the real deal because they need God to be the real deal for them. Because that's their only hope. So maybe it's for their salvation.

Have you ever been in a trial and thought to yourself, you know as I consider this and inquire of the Lord concerning this, I'm kind of sensing that this isn't really about me or even for me. This is for somebody else. So you start looking around like who's fault is it that I'm in this trial? Can we just get this show on the road so I can get out of this thing? Because this isn't for me. It's for you! Can you just hurry up and get saved, in Jesus' name of course.

[ Laughter ]

Genesis 50:20, real quick, Joseph to his brothers. **"What you did you meant for evil, but God meant it for good for the salvation of many this day."** You're going through this awful, horrible trial, and it's so hard. You're going to get a "but God" because He's going to bring salvation out of it.

And then lastly, — see, not bad — don't look at your watches yet — it recommits you.

I can't think of a better way to end the sermon than with what Peter says here in verse 19 concerning suffering leading to recommitment specifically as it relates to those of us who suffer according to God's will. We've already determined that this suffering is not the consequences of my own sin, of my own doing.

Rather I am suffering for righteousness sake, for Jesus' sake, for Christ sake. I'm suffering for that reason. And when I do suffer, it's a badge of honor for sure. But it has this much-needed effect of me recommitting myself anew and continuing to press on in the Lord.

I know it's — I'm going to use the word "strange" as Peter started off with. It seems strange, doesn't it? That the trial you would think would cause you to distance yourself from the Lord has the opposite effect, very strange, of not only not distancing me from the Lord but bringing me closer to the Lord. This is how it works.

And I'm recommitted to Him. I'm filled afresh and baptized anew in the power of the Holy Spirit. And it is this renewed strength that's come vis-à-vis perseverance that came vis-à-vis that fiery trial in the first place, the endurance, the perseverance, the strength. It's a newfound resolve. That's what trials do.

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Do you see them like that? Can I just ask you with me to reconsider your trial and look at it in this new way? God's doing a work, man! This trial: you think it's weird, it's strange, it doesn't make sense. It makes perfect sense. God knows exactly what He's doing. You don't know what He's doing.

That's a problem, by the way. We want to know because it's a control thing. Come on, be honest. You're in church. We want to be in control. It's kind of like wanting perseverance before the trial. That way you're in control of it. See, I want the money in the bank prior, so I don't have to — imagine this — how horrible is this — I don't have to trust God to provide it. I want manna before I go to bed so I can sleep knowing that the manna is already there so I don't have to trust the Lord in the morning when I wake up to provide that manna as He said He would.

See, that way I'm in control of the manna. I'm good now. I can sleep now. And God's like, oh, really? You want — oh, I'm sorry — I see now. You want to walk by sight, not by faith. And you want to be in control. You want to have everything you need so you don't have to trust Me. You don't have to believe and by faith know that I'm going to provide your every need at the exact time you need it.

So you wake up in the morning, and you're like there's the manna again, just like God said He would. I can't believe it. Really? Well, God said He would provide.

And so you go to this trial and God is providing everything you need in and through that trial. And it, I want to say it changes you, but better said, it ruins you for Him. It ruins you for Him.

Because when you've tasted of that cup and seen the Lord is good!

God, thank You so much!

That was amazing!

I know; I'm God.

That was awesome!

I know; I'm an awesome God.

I'm in awe!

I know; because I'm awesome.

Wow, God, how'd You do it?

I'm God; I can do anything.

No, really, that was cutting it a little bit close. But doesn't it have the effect of just ruining you like oh, if I can get through that, I can get through — well, I'm saying me again.

Now God's going to break me now. When God gets you through something you thought no way, it has a way of bringing you to that place where God — man, I don't know how You did it, I just know that You did it and I thank You that You did it. You know what this means, right? This is a game-changer.

Because anything that happens, if You did that, is there anything You can't do? You made it through that.

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God got you through that. Is there anything God won't get you through? You went through and God got you through the footman. Now here come the horsemen. Bring it.

What, God is not going to get me through the Horsemen? He got me through the footman.

David: We're going to close here in a moment. So don't look at your watches. We are really almost done, in Jesus' name, by faith, by the way. I don't see it, but I believe by faith. David up against the uncircumcised Philistine.

By the way, don't make yourself the hero of the story. David is Jesus who slays the uncircumcised Philistine blaspheming the name of God. So here's David. Saul's try to talk him out of it.

What does David do? He's like Saul, listen, with all due respect — I don't like it when people start off like that because I know what's coming, "With all due respect..."

God delivered into my hands a bear and a lion. This guy, he doesn't stand a chance. Now at first when — he doesn't even call them by his name, which means "champion." You'll never see David once refer to him as Goliath. He always refers to him as a blasphemous uncircumcised Philistine. And at first, you're thinking when David first arrives on the scene, you're thinking oh man, David's going to be — he's toast, man.

And they all believe that, by the way, Saul included. And then when David, in the Lord, says the Lord delivered a bear and a lion into my hands. It's there anything too hard for the Lord? He's not going to deliver this uncircumcised Philistine into my hands? Let me at him.

Now you start feeling sorry for the uncircumcised Philistine. He's toast, man. He's toast. And he was. He was.

Anyway that's the end of the sermon. So you can stand now. Kaponono, if you want to come up. Don't look, okay, you can look at your watches maybe; I don't know. You're so gracious to me. Thank you for being so gracious to me. You really are.

Father in Heaven, first of all thank You for humor. Thank You that it's so medicinal and therapeutic as You ordained it to be. Laughter is good, Lord, especially when you are in the midst of a trial, the joy, the laughter, the hope.

Lord, I want to pray for anyone who's in the middle of a fiery trial that You'll take what we've seen here today and by the Holy Spirit just begin that process. You're always so gentle in doing it. You're not rough or forceful. You're just gentle and patient. Just begin that process of ministering this to us so that we will maybe reconsider our trials and see them through a different lens. And not fight You so much, Lord.

Forgive us Lord for fighting You when all You're wanting to do is make us more like Jesus, and maybe bring others around us to Jesus. So Lord thank You. Thank You for the trials, not for the trials. We don't rejoice in the trials, I mean, for the trials. We rejoice in them because we know what You're doing because of them.

So Lord thank You. Thank You for loving us enough. If you didn't love us, You wouldn't bother. But because You love us so much. So Lord thank You. We love You so much too. In Jesus' name, amen.