

1 Peter 4, verses 12 through 16. 1 Peter 4, verses 12 through 16. As we prepare to look at verses 12 through 16, let me remind you of the final words of verse 11. Chapter 4, verse 11 ended with these words. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

These words at the closing of verse 11 declare that the Lord Jesus Christ has dominion over all things. But if Jesus has dominion over all things, Does this mean that you who follow Jesus can expect to have a suffer-free life? You can see how someone might think this way. If Jesus has dominion over all things, as the end of verse 11 has stated, and if I am following Jesus, Can I who follow him who has dominion over all things expect to have a suffer-free life?

And Peter provides an answer to this question this morning, and in short, he says, no, you cannot expect to have a suffer-free life even though you are following Jesus. While it is true that Christ has dominion over all things, It is not true that you who follow him can expect to have a suffer-free life.

With this context in mind, let us pray now and ask God to bless the reading and then the preaching of his word. Dear Heavenly Father, we ask that you would make us here this morning alike those disciples on the Emmaus Road who, when they heard your word, we read that it was as if their hearts burned within them. Oh God, that's not something that eloquence can produce. That's not something that intellect can produce. Oh Lord God, that is something which only you can produce. Make us men and women, boys and girls here today, whose hearts burn as we hear your word read. And burn, O Lord, as we hear it proclaimed, insofar as, in your mercy, you grant this preacher grace to faithfully proclaim your word. In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray, amen.

Hear now the word of God, 1 Peter 4, verses 12 through 16. Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed. because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. This ends the reading of God's holy word. May he bless now the proclamation of it to our lives.

Well, the fact is that as a follower of Jesus Christ, you will suffer. The question is not will you suffer, but rather how will you suffer? Will you be bitter and angry towards God in your suffering? Will you view your suffering as an excuse to sin against God? Will you doubt God in the midst of your suffering?

And all the sufferings you experience as a Christian, those sufferings you experience that are directly tied to your following Christ, like perhaps rejection or reviling or insult, but also the suffering you experience, not so much directly because you're following Christ, but even the suffering you experience more generally as a Christian who lives in a fallen world. All the suffering you experience, either directly for following Christ or more generally because you live in a fallen world, Peter says all of that suffering you experience in it all You are to glorify God in your suffering. You are to glorify God in your suffering. And Peter gives you three reasons that you are to glorify God in your suffering. First, Peter says, glorify God in your suffering because God is refining you. Second, glorify God in your suffering because God is conforming you. And third, glorify God in your suffering because God is with you.

So first this morning, glorify God in your suffering because God is refining you. Look again at verse 12. Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you. as though something strange were happening to you.

Verse 12 begins with a command. Perhaps it sounds like a strange command to you. He says, do not be surprised. Now, why would Peter say, do not be surprised? Why would he issue this command? Well, it's because some believers are surprised when they suffer. It's because some believers think that because they're following Christ, they ought not to suffer. Therefore, they're surprised when the fiery trial comes upon them. And so Peter, by divine inspiration, is saying, do not be surprised. This is exactly what you can expect as a follower of Christ.

Peter doesn't want you to get the wrong idea of what the Christian life is going to be like. You suffer daily as a Christian. Sometimes your suffering is directly because you're following Christ. Sometimes it's some level of rejection. It's some level of insult. It can, of course, manifest itself in persecution. But it also is in the more general ways that you suffer as a Christian. You suffer as a Christian because you are at war against your sin. You suffer as a Christian because you're daily trying to repent. You suffer as a Christian because you feel your inadequacies regularly as you strive to live for the Lord. You sense your weakness. Most often, it is the most seasoned saint that senses most profoundly his or her weakness. The seasoned saint often senses that they are so far short of what they ought to be. That is a real sense in which you can say it's an experience of suffering. And it's one that the unbeliever doesn't know because the unbeliever doesn't understand that they fall far short of the glory of God. They don't sense how much they need Christ, and therefore it's a suffering that is elusive to them, unknown to their experience in their daily life.

But adding on to those sorts of sufferings that are particular to being a Christian, You have other sufferings, don't you? You have all the sufferings that the world faces, too. So you get to be, as a Christian, you get to have this, as a Christian. You get to have special sufferings, because you follow Christ, and general sufferings that all the world gets to have, as well. You get to have the sufferings of grief and disappointment. You get to have emotional sufferings and physical sufferings, pain and death. So you have, as a Christian, multitudes of suffering.

But Peter says this about the sufferings that you go through as a Christian. He says they are fiery trials. He calls them fiery in verse 12, and he calls them fiery because they're meant to refine you. And he goes on to say that these trials test you. Now, how do these trials test you? In what sense do they test you? Well, in this sense, they reveal what is really in your heart. If you were here this morning during Sunday school, Wayne told this story from the book of 1 Samuel in which Saul was tested. He was told he needed to wait seven days and Samuel would come and make a sacrifice to the Lord. And then they would fight their enemies. Well, six and a half days had passed. Saul was being tested. What would he do? Would he trust the Lord or not? And what that test revealed is that Saul was not willing to trust the Lord. He made a sacrifice, an unauthorized sacrifice, instead of waiting for God and his timing, who had promised that Samuel would come and make a sacrifice within seven days.

Now I ask you this morning, did that test that Saul experienced make him sin? No, it revealed the sin that was in his heart. If it's helpful, you might think of it like this. Imagine someone comes here today and they give you all a math test. And let's just say you're not very good at math. Well, does that math test make you bad at math? No, it reveals that you're bad at math. And that's what testing does in God's, in our lives too, from God. It doesn't make you sin. God's trials don't make you transgress his laws, they reveal that in your heart you are prone to transgress His laws. They reveal the sin that resides in your heart.

And humanity is always inclined to try to make an excuse for their sins. Well, I wouldn't have sinned if it weren't for these circumstances. I wouldn't have sinned if it weren't for this trial in my life. And what Peter is saying here by

divine inspiration is that that sin that was shown to you in the fire of that trial was merely revealing to you what was already in your heart. It reveals to you that you're in great need of Christ.

Who of us to some extent didn't experience that over the past week with the ice storm? To some extent, I believe all of us in this room can say, I saw something of my heart that was not good in the past week. But it wasn't because there was an ice storm. It was because my heart, my soul doesn't love Christ as much as I like to think that I do. It's because I'm not content with Christ as much as I might convince myself I am. And so what does that do but show us our need for Christ?

These are tests in your life to show you your sin that you might see Christ and when in the fiery furnace you do not overtly transgress God's law. All that shows you is that God has been very pleased to bless you in the midst of that test and you should give him all the glory you think of.

Abraham in Genesis 22. Remember how he was tested with his special son, his covenant son Isaac, that he would sacrifice him. It was a test we read. And he passed the test. He was willing to sacrifice his own son because he feared the Lord above all else. But that test revealed that he in that hour was being faithful to his God. He did, in a sense, we could say pass that test, but he passed it because God was being faithful to him.

So in your life, when you fail the test and you see your sin, it's a call to repent. And when you pass the test, when you, by God's grace, don't sin in an overtly awful way in the midst of a trial, you glorify God and you praise him because you know you only passed that test because he himself was with you.

So perhaps in your life this morning, you're going through suffering. What is that suffering revealing about your heart? That's the question. What is the suffering in your life revealing about your heart? Is the suffering that you are going through refining you by forcing you to pray more than you ever have before? Is the suffering that you are going through this morning refining you by forcing you to trust God and not your finances? Is the suffering that you are going through this morning forcing you to acknowledge that you're not in control and that God is in control. In whatever ways God is refining you through suffering, the point is this, do not reject God in your suffering, but be refined by God through your suffering. Do not reject God through your suffering, be refined by God through your suffering.

But secondly, this morning, glorify God in your suffering because he is conforming you. He is conforming you, verse 13. So we saw he's refining you but you see more specifically that he's conforming you in verse 13.

But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. Your suffering is not just refining you, as we saw in verse 12, it is also more positively, according to verse 13, conforming you to the image of Christ. Your suffering is an instrument in God's hand to refine you from your sin and conform you to Christ. This is why he commands you to rejoice, he says, insofar as you share Christ's sufferings. Why should you rejoice? Not because your sufferings aren't painful, but because your pain has purpose. The purpose of your pain, the purpose of your suffering, is to conform you to the image of Christ.

So as you suffer temptation, that temptation in your life should make you long to be conformed to the image of Christ that you might not transgress God's laws. As you suffer physical pain in your life, that suffering of physical pain in your life ought to make you long for the day when Christ will return and there will be no sorrow and there will be no more pain. As you suffer some level of insult in your life or ridicule or rejection at some level for following Christ it should make you long to be conformed to Christ and not to revile in return but to continue to entrust yourself to your heavenly father. Whatever suffering you experience should be used as an instrument in God's hands in your life to conform you to the image of Christ. You are being weaned through your suffering off of this world and on to Christ.

He goes on to state in verse 13, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. This means you can expect to rejoice with Christ when he returns in glory if you rejoice with Christ as you suffer now. If you are willing to rejoice with Christ as you suffer now, you can expect and anticipate that you will likewise rejoice with him when he returns in glory. That is the logic of the end of verse 13. And this is the pattern of Christ's own life, isn't it? Humiliation, then exaltation. Suffering, then glory, the cross, then the crown. And so in your life, you who follow Christ can expect suffering and then glory, the cross and then the crown, humiliation and then exaltation.

So how does one rejoice when suffering? Does this mean that you deny you're in pain when you're really in pain? You know, you've just broken your leg and it's very obvious to everyone around you that you're in extreme pain. You say, I'm not really hurting because I'm a Christian. I don't, I don't, I don't, I'm not really suffering. No, you're really suffering. It doesn't mean that you deny that you're suffering, that you're experiencing actual pain. But you rejoice because you know that Christ is conforming you to his image. through that suffering. He is making you look away from yourself. He is causing you by His grace to look to Him and to be made more and more like Him. You rejoice because this is the day that the Lord has made. This day, whatever day it is of suffering for you, whatever experience of suffering it is for you, this is the day that the Lord has made. It may be a day of suffering, it may be a day of sorrow, it may be a day of torture, it may be a day of grief, but you know what day it still is? A day that the Lord has made. A day for you to praise him, a day for you to live for him, a day for you to be conformed into his image. No matter what inconveniences you experience it is an opportunity to be made more and more into the image of Christ. So your suffering has purpose and that purpose is to conform you to Christ.

But thirdly and finally this morning glorify God in your suffering because God is with you because God is with you. And you see this in verses 14 through 16 but we're going to zero in for a moment on verse 14. It says here, If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. The picture here in verse 14 is of a Christian who is being insulted for his belief in Christ. And Peter is saying, when you endure that insult for Christ's sake, you are actually being blessed. And you are being blessed because the spirit of God rests upon you in the midst of your suffering. He is echoing what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter five. Jesus said there in Matthew five, blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad.

Peter knows the temptation to be ashamed of the name of Christ. He himself succumbed to that very temptation on the night when Jesus Christ was betrayed, and a servant girl asked him if he knew Christ, and he denied Christ. He knows the temptation to be ashamed of the name of Christ. But he is saying here in verse 14, you are to resist that temptation. You must not be ashamed of the name of Christ. You must endure insults with patience because God is with you. And he even calls these insults blessings in verse 14. Now, how can he call these insults blessings? Well, he says, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Now, this phrase, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you, is almost certainly an allusion to Isaiah 11.2. There in Isaiah 11.2, we learn that the spirit of the Lord is going to rest upon the Messiah. That the Spirit of the Lord is going to come and rest upon the Messiah. And in Matthew 3, verse 16, in Jesus' baptism, we learn this, that the Spirit of God was descending like a dove and coming to rest on him. Jesus' baptism when the Spirit came down and rested on him was a fulfillment of Isaiah 11 2 which said the Spirit of God would come and rest upon the Messiah. And then in Matthew 3 16 we see the Spirit of God coming and resting upon the Messiah at his baptism.

But what's strange about all of that is that same imagery is here being used not of the Messiah in first Peter 4:14, but of the church talking about you all, you are blessed, the text says, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. What's the point? Well, the very spirit of God that rested upon Christ at his baptism rests upon his church. You individually and corporately, the very spirit of God that descended like a dove in Matthew 3, 16, onto the Lord Jesus Christ, that same spirit rests upon the believer, especially in the presence and in the midst of his suffering. The spirit of God rests upon the children of God. And what did Jesus's life look like after the spirit of God rested upon him? Well, it was a life of suffering, wasn't it? After the Spirit of God rested upon him, he went into the wilderness and he was tempted. And of course, later, as you know, he will go to the cross. But that's not where the story ended for Christ. That same spirit who rested upon him will raise him from the dead and he is glorified now.

And the same spirit that rested upon Christ rests upon his followers. So Peter is saying then in verse 14 that though the world might reject you for following Christ, know this, though the world may reject you for following Christ, the spirit of glory and of God himself is resting upon you.

Now, what does this actually look like in your life? Well, perhaps this illustration from the Old Testament would help us. Do you remember that story in 2 Kings 6, when Elisha and his servant are surrounded by the Syrian enemy? And Elisha's servant is terrified as he looks out and he sees these Syrians all around them. And then Elisha says, there are more of us than there are of them. And Elisha's servant is obviously perplexed because he sees himself and he sees Elisha. But then Elisha prays that the Lord might open the servant's eyes. And then the servant is enabled to see chariots of fire that are surrounding them and protecting them.

While you might not always be able to see the spirit of glory and of God resting upon you, especially in the midst of your suffering, which is the context of our verse, This verse is saying that the spirit of glory and of God is resting upon you, especially in your suffering. And just like that servant could not see physically those chariots of fire all around him, so you may not be able to see with your own eyes the spirit of glory and of God resting upon you. You're not going to be able to see a halo around you that says, Spirit of God and of glory resting upon me. But what I am telling you from this text is that it is true. That the Spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity and all of his glory is with you in your suffering.

And if this in fact is the case, you ought to be able to endure any insult or rejection knowing that God is with you and he cares for you. It means that you're never alone in your suffering. Your elder brother who has a nature just like yours and a heart like yours has sent his spirit to be with you in your suffering. This means that as you are trying to parent your children and it's difficult, the spirit of God and of glory is resting upon you. It means as you're trying to run your business and it's difficult, it means that the spirit of God and of glory is resting upon you. It means as you're suffering as you raise your children or your grandchildren or you look towards the potential of health

complications, the spirit of God and of glory is resting upon you. And certainly in our context, most specifically, when you're experiencing insult or rejection for the sake of Christ. the spirit of glory and of God is resting upon you. God is with you.

And then he continues to develop this in verses 15 and 16. He says, but let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief. So don't suffer because you're sinning, but suffer because you're being faithful. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. These verses quite literally command you, it's actually a command, to glorify God. Glorify God in your suffering. And that alone should be enough incentive for us to obey the command. God said it, therefore we ought to do it. We heard that a little bit in the Sunday school class this morning. God says it, therefore we ought to do it.

Think, for example, of God's command to Noah to build the ark. That was a hundred plus year job. God made the command, Noah starts building. You think of Abraham being commanded to circumcise. That would be a tough command. And as soon as he's commanded, what do we read Abraham does? He follows the command. He obeys. So God's bare command ought to be enough for us to obey it.

But what's so fantastic about this verse is in the context he doesn't just give the bare command, which is already enough incentive for us to obey, but he supplies the ability to obey the command because he's told us in verse 14 that the spirit of glory in God is with us. In other words, how are you going to obey this command in verses 15 and 16 to glorify God? Because it is a command in verse 16, glorify God. He's told you how, it's by the spirit of God being with you, verse 14. It's by the very fact that the glorious spirit of God is with you, that is the ability, the energizer, so to speak, to enable you to obey the command to glorify God. So glorify God, how? Because the spirit of glory is with you to enable you to glorify God.

So whatever you're suffering, this command stands true. You are called to glorify God. So this week, you're going to suffer, you will suffer, you are suffering. And this text tells you to glorify God in your suffering. Glorify God this week in your suffering because your suffering is refining you. Because your suffering is by God's grace conforming you to the image of Christ. It's showing you sins you wish you didn't have to see. It's showing you perhaps growth where you didn't know you had grown. It's showing you something about Christ and your need to be conformed to his image but also Suffer to the glory of God because he's with you. He is with you in your suffering.

Let us pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you and praise you that we who suffer get to suffer not without you but with you. That we who suffer get to suffer not without purpose but that our sins might be refined and shaven off and that our lives might be more like Jesus. Oh Lord God, we have seen something of our sin in this room this past week through a minor suffering in the grand scheme of things. And this upcoming week we will see more sin in our life through our suffering. And we ask that that sin that we see would be used in your mercy to drive us to Jesus. That as soon as Satan thinks he has won a great victory, you would flip it on his head and show that even you are so reigning that even you will use our failures to show us Christ. Help us this week, oh Lord. Help us as we suffer. Whatever it might be, Lord, whether it be parenting, whether it be children suffering and their obedience to their parents, whether it be a real legitimate rejection or insult that we receive for the name of Christ, whether it be something as grievous as a death of a loved one, grant us the grace, oh God, that we might suffer well for Christ. It's in his name that we pray, amen.